

STEVEN FRATTALI

COLLECTED POEMS

1985-2015

VOLUME FOUR

THE NEW PRESS OF BOSTON

BOSTON

2017

ALSO BY STEVEN FRATTALI

COLLECTED POEMS VOLUME ONE

COLLECTED POEMS VOLUME TWO

COLLECTED POEMS VOLUME THREE

***PERSON PLACE AND WORLD: A LATE MODERN
READING OF FROST'S POETRY***

***HYPODERMIC LIGHT: THE POETRY OF PHILIP
LAMANTIA AND THE QUESTION OF SURREALISM***

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Collected Poems, 1985-2015 Volume Four

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New Press of Boston, The

ISBN-13: 978-0-9995492-3-0

ISBN-10: 0999549235

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017961387

Acknowledgements: Early work toward organizing these volumes was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation of Taiwan.

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DESPOILED SHORES

Night in Los Angeles

Night in Los Angeles. Gray yellow dust
beneath a street light,
a parking lot, dim apartment cubes.
Yellow light floods
the courtyard. It is Western and La Cienega.

Farther out, traveling. East Los Angeles.
Black palm trees, breeze touches them, torments them.
Breeze works through black crowns
like fingers through a woman's hair,
though not the hair of her head.
Lightning bolt sky with no lighting.
Rain flooded streets with no rain.
Hurricane warning with no hurricane.

A car parked in front of sand colored cubes.
Windows dark, and a hailstone
like a burnt out light bulb
fallen from the sky some days ago,
preserved in this plastic bag
by a special dispensation of the gods.

Flame like a gunshot. Spider web cracks
ring the dark bullet hole. A halo feels for a face,
first a chin, then a forehead. A second face
sips at the light's straw. The circle of light
is a nipple sucked by two heads.
Two trees rise up through the earth of two spines.
Eyes open wider and eyes within eyes open.
The night is peeled back from the night.

Stars fix themselves into their final shapes.
It is a storm night. Pale moonrise sky.
Moon veined like a fetus' head.

So then out. They are going around
two wash buckets of light
that pour out their soap rainbows before the car.
Four legs stripe their way through.
In the sky the Milky Way
is pouring out its seeds of infinite blackness.
In the sky, the clouds, like used movie tickets,
are torn in two by infinite invisible hands.
On the earth, men are torn in two
by infinite invisible hands, by finite and visible ones.

Carlos and Eduardo have faces.
See them in this bouquet of white blue light.
Carlos and Eduardo have faces. See them
in this biopsy of space/time. See the faces
of Carlos and Eduardo covered by these two cloths.

Chad and Jim have faces have hands
have holsters have regulation side arms.
See Chad and Jim stilled in their darkly jeweled rhomboid.
Threads of light, looped and tied into knots on a screen.
The map of Los Angeles
marks it like a sweat stain.
Chirpy voices, very normal and calm,
spray invisible lighter fluid onto dim coals.
Third degree burns, car oven doors.

Two friends of Carlos and Eduardo,
those who have just stepped through the wash of light,
are coming closer. They approach from behind
like the past itself. The past was the entire previous world;
therefore, they are the entire previous world coming back.

They become each other's shadows, now
The twig of their feet splits apart
into two leaves. Two leaves still adhering to the branch
blown by an invisible wind.

Chad and Jim watch the street
with their eyes and with their ears.
But they hear the night around them
with their skin. In their wallets
there are various pictures. Their wallets
have more pictures than they have money.
Their pockets have more keys than they have coins.
But the past that is coming toward them
does not care about this.
The past that is coming toward them
approaches from two directions.
The past that is coming toward them
approaches sometimes walking, sometimes running,
sometimes it makes itself small
and is a small dark globe
made of shadow and blood mixed, hardened;
sometimes it is tall and thin, like a razor opened up.
Sometimes it crawls on its stomach
like the original serpent in the garden
at the beginning of the world.

Many things in the world happen by chance,
but some things do not happen by chance.
Many things in the world happen by fate,
but some things do not happen by fate.
Many things in the world happen for a reason,
but some things do not happen for a reason.

A slammed car door
chopping off time like a fish's head.
Light corroded darkness.

Light fizz around burnt cubes
just past the giant pineapples.
Head dress of Montezuma.
Crown of the jaguar king.

There are blue shoulders swinging
and wading through. A gun fits into a holster
like a man into a woman.

There is the awkward wag of a riot stick.
There is the weight of your whole belt
like wading in waist high water,
the current pushing you just slightly.

Torches drawn and automatics drawn
and hidden behind the hip. Courtyard light
cut. Voices still. A quick scattering of steps
like pinecones falling through branches.
Both torches lit are like roach feelers touching at walls.
A blind man's fingers feeling over a face.
They point v-ing in at the base of a large shrub –
it is starkly illuminated like an internal organ,
bristling in bright existence.

The human voice, when transmitted over electronic
networks,
is a kind of stain. Voice stains on the night's window.
Light windows slide on the surface of the night's bubble.
Light doors and two men standing in them.

Who the fuck what I don't know I don't know
I don't know look there yeah yeah shit you fuck
where the fuck over there see him see him watch out
stay there I'll go around watch by those windows
anybody home I this fuckin place son of a bitch
yes yes yes all right big man who are you
look get down what's that nothing fuck you nothing

who the fuck look man Jim yeah I'm over here

A brown starfish the size of a man
is caught in a light pool writhing leisurely,
trying to awaken from the longest sleep of all,
or from the second longest sleep.
Every starfish has a man in it who is trying to awaken.

Who's that fucker skeekin around out there
call for back up what is that crack some kind a

The badge lies on the chest as a bullet lies in the palm of
the hand.

The star fish rises and becomes a man,
a man stands up and breaks through the light,
the light egg wobbles and sweeps out over shelves and wall
posters –

there is a shot,
and then a second shot tears the room's dust rag, rips it.

Fuck man where the fuck who the fuck
cop piece a shit pig piece a shit shut up ok

Jim Jim
A torch swims wildly through the night like a sperm cell.

A third shot.

Carlos and Eduardo, see their pictures
fluttering down on top of Chad and on top of Jim.

Four legs move silently around. They take the man who
had risen up.
He is still alive, they take him.

Fukushima Earthquake and Tsunami, 2011

This is the town of Yamadamachi. The white apartment blocks, five stories high, stand in a landscape that is smoking like a bed of ashes. The streets have been wiped out by the waves of the tsunami, the flood has scoured the landscape like an acid bath across a metal surface, leaving only a corroded face with white chips of small cars here and there.

A hazy smoke of dull orange rises from several points in vague cones, in the background there is a crust of smaller roofs under a chalky and dim white fog. There are no people anywhere.

The next photo shows the town of Minamisanriku, where 10,000 people have simply vanished.

There is a group of apartment buildings in a residential area of about one mile square – home to thousands of people, but now completely empty. The people themselves are gone, no one knows what happened to them.

The entire surface of the earth around the buildings is washed over with a flow of mud and debris – one sees gray shards of talc here and there, which are the smaller buildings scattered around. They all lie in the bend of a river, but here there is no longer any distinction between river and land, all boundaries have been clawed back into the ocean. A huge oxide stain the color of rotted pumpkin occupies the right lower corner of the picture; it is the remnant of a road, but now there are no roads leading anywhere.

In a third photo, a middle aged couple are standing in a field. Shards of bright blue water can be seen in the background. It is an almost inexplicable picture. The tidal waves caught up huge amounts of grass and weeds, winding it all into matted balls and sweeping them over the surface of the land. The couple are standing near a large bale of such grass -- it is like a bale of rotted rope the color of manila paper -- somehow speared through diagonally with several logs, and with part of an aluminum light pole, now twisted and broken in half; on one side, sheets of aluminum are crammed into the arrangement, as though some garage siding had been crumpled, in the way that a child might crumple a candy bar wrapper, and then shoved into the bale's cheek.

The man is bent over, his hands on both his knees, as though someone had punched him in the stomach; the woman, in a white quilted winter coat, is looking away in no particular direction; she draws both wrists up to her face, weeping, her eyes closed. Around them are three rescue workers, tough men, veterans, who have just told them that their eighteen year old daughter is dead. One of the men, older, with glasses, looks down at the ground, his mouth slightly open. He does not know what to say.

Saigon

Images of the fall of Saigon: the man dangling from the
helicopter runners, the man punched in the face
clawing his way onto a cargo plane

Liberation of Saigon, how well we remember: the Saigon
women, the tree-lined boulevards, marble facades of
the old hotels, French doors with tiny balconies,
stone urns along the sidewalks, the markets selling
vegetables and fruit, the fragmentation grenade one
day, the men with no legs on wheeled boards, the
women slim and shapely almost doll-like, wrought
iron fences around balconies

Wind blowing, white urns with nothing in them, traffic
released from its starting gate, the street vibrating
Cargo plane overhead cannot be heard, its dark green
fuselage looks charred in the sunlight that is
bursting through clouds like the geodesic dandelion
puff inside an ice cube

It is a new day, no one slept the night before, a night with
sounds like corrugated tin being ripped, a night with
sounds like a steer being slaughtered

The air traffic is heavier, the planes overhead are like
swarms of bees increasing, the helicopters are
monstrous dragon flies, unaccustomed shadows are
wiped over streets and building sides

The city is being squeezed and kneaded, throbbing, ragged
crowds are hemorrhaging down the wider
boulevards, each person-shape waving an invisible
ticket, holding it up as though to keep it dry

Yet on one street, sudden rains blow through the sides of
palm trees that flash the bone structure of chicken
wings or dried fish

The trees are like people partially erased by snow sprays
from a fire hose, protesting loudly, open mouthed,
shoved backward, blowing off like pieces of roofing
A Chinese-made tank has set itself across a street entrance
like a headstone over an open grave, blood is being
poured into the sky

Crowds down on the street, evacuated high school seen
from a roof, it is day, it is night

Bonfires are lit somewhere in the sky, buildings are crying
out only a few blocks north

Sunset sunrise broils in the heavens, yellow light, blood
juice clouds

The helicopter is black then green, light darkens somehow:
tachycardia stethoscope air, pummeling air, throat
tightening shadows, suffocating wind wash
Strobe light blades enforcing crouched abasement,
scurrying
What will happen next, you are wondering

HAITI

A porthole in the air opens and I look down from 40,000
feet, the ocean lies far beneath, a bright slate green,
and a few ships the size of pin heads, each one with
a white thread behind it, and we descend in layers
of air, in gigantic stair steps

The Caribbean Sea, crossed and re-crossed with
instruments and symbols, sea crowded with history
and with voices slashing like knives, knives of metal,
voices of parchment and paper

And now it is the provincial capital and we are watching
the sun sink down into the ocean, in the slanted light
of the courtyards the images are arriving, stone lions
shaken from the great hive of the sun appear in the
dusty twilight of the empty streets, they are the lions
of disaster, of catastrophe, of change

The mist of the earthquake fills the valley like a white fog,
the waves of white haze flow up in a dust cloud, it is
a thick dust and filmy with a strange aura in the
bright gray light that fills the overcast day, a winter
day in the Caribbean

And the lead green hills around seem to shake, the ground
itself is moving, it is like being on a ship's deck, on
the roof of a car that's being driven across a field, it
is like a man raising himself up as you stand on top
of him

The sky dips into the ground, the ground slams up to you,
the world tilts like a plane banking, it flows and
stamps like a small boat in surf, there is a fog of grit
all through the air that tastes like chalk

The waves are inside the earth, the sea that the city floated
on is itself drawn away, removed like a tablecloth
dragged out from under a place setting

The city is dragged off the table's edge, the ground itself is
the cloth gathering up, the earth is poured out from
under the buildings the streets and squares, the
houses are poured out from under the people

Columns walls falling across sunlight, floors buckling and
splitting, buildings of concrete and steel smashing
like stacks of dropped plates, whole apartment
buildings smashed like china, the pieces scattered
around

The ground is moving underneath the city, the ground is
still and the sky is turning upside down, the buildings
are tense, there were heavy explosions somewhere in
the earth and the city is trying to flee trembling like
bottles on a tray, the acrobat buildings are about to
fall off the ground's trapeze, the buildings are skaters
losing their balance, but the ice is breaking anyway

Window sill blind sway floor smash crawling dirt grip wall
roots scrape rocks blood flow of stones pouring metal
pipes twisted burning ceiling shirt ripped fire smoke
eyelids throat of dirt dead wood arm leg wood face of
fire thirst

Face of burnt tar legs of crushed stone hanging arm like a
twig torn open chest torn open stomach leg bent at
the knee the wrong way like a straw skin tingling
with ants staring eyes with beetle leg red veins
staring into the sun pond of blood

Split open face of the city broken windshield of the city the
gutters of roads streaming with crowds hemorrhage
crowds

Desert floor city of blue sky burnt into fissures cracked in
the furnace of catastrophe hurricane wind of ground

swell breaking waves of split up roads cars plowed to
the side face of windshield slashed by the dropped
balcony railing building facades collapsed like a dead
drunk's forehead lying in their vomit of bright
window shards of upchucked cinder blocks and white
dust

Screams of the city cries of the city stunned bruise
throbbing mind of the crowds floating in partial
amnesia, mind like a drilled tooth in collapsing
fatigue, they have never felt like this before, they
cannot go on with this, they cannot see to the end of
this, bring them up out of this pit where the world has
fallen, bring them up out of this ditch

Where are the hands that might be extended to them, where
are the hands that reach out, where is the help? the
entire blue sky, the lead green hills around, the deep
horizon reaching out to the Caribbean, to the gulf
streams of the Atlantic, there is no help anywhere

When I am tired and thirsty how miserable I am, and when
I haven't slept how miserable I am, when I have not
been able to wash or to use a proper bathroom how
miserable I am, how the world is a vice that presses
in on me, how the minutes and the hours are like
dirty water, like an aluminum shovel under my head,
like brick dust in my mouth, how other men and
women are like shadows, are mere images

When I am tired and thirsty, when I am dirty and exhausted
how miserable I am, and when even a small part of
my body hurts in a small way how troubling it is,
how I cannot get away from even the slightest pain,
even the smallest injury

But now there are some who have not drunk water or slept
or washed in days, who have not eaten, who are
exhausted beyond the worst that I have ever been,
now there are some who do not have only some small

pain or minor injury but rather their arms and legs are mangled, their bones are broken, their skin is abraded torn burnt, they have joints twisted and crushed, they have infections that swell with pus

How important it is for me when I am sick even a little that I be able to go to a doctor, but here there are not enough doctors and those who are injured have no one to help them, there are bones that cannot be set, there are burns that cannot have bandages, that cannot have water that cannot have pain killers and burns are the most painful of wounds

When I love someone how much I want to protect them from all harm and from all pain or injury, how I would do anything to help them if they were hurt or sick, when I love someone how fragile their body seems to me and how I want to hold the entire world away from them so that they would never be harmed

And yet here so many see their loved ones dead lying in ditches stretched in the dirt lying in the road and there the day burns down on them, their uncovered bodies lie exposed, their arms spread wide, their faces twisted in the pain which was their last moments

Such great stretches of devastation, buildings of five stories made of poured concrete reinforced with steel, their walls exploded into dust spray

Streets are turned up like tar paper roofing ripped off, a building caved in as though stepped on by a giant boot, another apartment house is crushed in on one side the way one crumples a soda can

Where is everyone? – the wind is pushing huge cumuli along like handfuls of froth skimmed up, radiant clouds towering like marble falling into themselves

and rising up from nothing, all in silence, a sea spray
of wind and lemon light, gulls circling in patterns,
black in the sun glare, other birds like scraps of paper
There are oily looking pillars of black smoke from fires
here and there in the distance, and a white smoke
hangs over the hills

The shacks on the hillside in a poor neighborhood are
razed, it looks like the excavation site of an ancient
city, whole sections have become archeological ruins
in one hour; in an instant, history has turned back to
its origin before any possible story, and yet it has not
really turned back

There are groups of people moving along the roadside in
the dirt, their heads down as though they were
uncertain of the ground under them

In places the earth is torn up the way a heart surgeon tears
up a chest, roadside fields like torn open rib cages,
roads like faces ripped by shrapnel, roads like
arteries gaping, serum of human bodies, clots of
debris piles, scabs of burning buildings streaming
with black smoke cut through by orange flames

At the very end of a street of gray stone walls there is an
empty façade – is it a church? – that is like the open
door of a furnace, intense fire within it

Is there a war, is there a war on the earth? and yet what is at
war with men and with women, what is at war with
children wandering disoriented and screaming, their
arms held out?

Piles of stones and bricks, an entire bedroom almost intact
lies exposed to the blue sky, a red coverlet on the
bed, there are packs of dogs wandering, there are
people running here and there shouting pointing
waving, some stand around doing nothing

There is a woman with thick braided hair, firm beautiful
arms, Asian cheekbones, a broad flat nose, African

lips full like the sections of an orange, skin like
amber and dark honey, and the oval eyes of the
Europeans

There is a woman lying amid the pieces of a floor broken
up, a blue gray dust as thick as flour is over her arms
and on her face, her braided hair is covered with it,
she seems to be swimming through a surf of crushed
white stone, she is the only survivor of the room that
has collapsed around her, that she is crawling out of,
as she looks up into the camera, as she looks up into
my face your face

In another photograph there is a human hand in the left
lower corner of the picture, there is nothing else,
there is a large stone near it, the camera itself sits on
the bare ground, there is debris from a wall, there is a
brown bag of some kind and there is a blue shirt on
the ground, the person cannot be seen but the hand is
there

It is the hand of a man – middle-aged, slender, dark brown
-- covered with gray dust and bits of a brick wall

Who was this man, what was his name, what was his
history? a world was in this man's head, a world of
landscapes and of places and times, a confluence of
stories intermingling like the gulf stream itself, the
stories of the entire globe of human beings

For if we could follow out every thread of this history and
all the branchings of it, the whole system of streams
would carry us around the world like the gulf stream
itself, like the deepest currents in the ocean

And if we could hear the voices that were in this memory
this mind and the voices in their minds and the voices
in theirs, we would hear the voices of the entire
world

And now this mind is over with, it is gone, it will never
come back in the entire future history of life on earth,

this hand will never move again, this face will never
 again be seen, this voice will never again be heard
 speaking the French of the island of Hispaniola
There are storefronts with eyes torn out, open skulls gaping
 the brains exposed their faces smashed in their teeth
 in shatters of glass like breakers of crushed ice
 spewed over the sidewalk, where a draught of brown
 rats streams through scattering
The palm trees pulse like hearts they tick like clocks behind
 a black iron fence, the colonial building behind has
 fallen in on itself, the roof collapsed in three places, a
 row of white boxes like frosted cakes set out, the
 palm trees washing the air that moves them, the hills
 in the background flowing low and lead colored, the
 roofs have collapsed as though someone had broken
 them like crackers into a cup of soup, like white
 crumbly biscuits
The white sidewalk in the foreground, the black lamppost,
 how the people stand around looking almost normal,
 walking by as though it were an ordinary day, and
 yet each one of them knows those who are dead who
 died yesterday who died this morning last night who
 will die this afternoon, whose lives have just
 disappeared from the earth and will never again be
 known there, whose faces will never again be seen
A young man in light blue jeans is carried by four others,
 his white shirt is stained with a deep red at one
 shoulder and along his collar, the precise planes in
 his face, the high cheekbones the broad flat nose, are
 absolutely noble
There is a crimson gash over his left eye, he cries out in
 pain and asks to be set back down onto the street that
 is gritty with white powder where now his right hand
 – long slender fingers like those of an artist – is
 resting
A woman of twenty-five in black shorts and a pink satin

blouse lies across the trunk of a car, a young man
scoops up her legs and bare feet, the soles are dusty,
she is dazed and floppy as though she were dizzy
drunk

Inside a garage five men are lying on the concrete floor,
how long has it been since they have had any water
to drink, how long has it been since they have had
any food, how long has it been that this one who lies
with legs apart both knees flat on the floor his two
feet pointing limply in opposite directions his dark
blue pants soaked with blood below the knees so that
they seem to be painted with brown paint how long
has this man been like this, and these others with
him, and this one woman who is holding a small
child to her chest looking around exhausted worried
her mind spinning with terror her heart jumping at
the slightest sound, how long have these people been
miserable like this, who has let this happen, how
many of them will be dead by the end of the day the
week the month the year, who has let this happen

On another street a father carries his daughter away from
the collapsed building, she is a girl of about ten, her
thin arms are around his shoulders, her legs are
around his waist, she buries her face against his
shoulder, and his arms are thick and muscular and he
carries her easily, but the strain of worry is in his face
and you can feel the fear in both of them

How great the love of the father for the daughter, how
tormented with fear and anxiety, how he would like
to push the entire world away from her small body,
how the chaotic and half destroyed city swarms with
dangers of every kind, each one of which he can
easily foresee, so few of which she knows anything
about

How much he loves her, what will become of this girl you
wonder, why do they not have more help? who has

let this go on, who has let this happen?
And I see one young girl of about fifteen in the pleated old-fashioned skirt of a traditional high school, a white cotton blouse, a dark blue tie with a white stripe across it, it is the uniform of the school that she attends, and yet the stripe is her own unique touch, and I think will this girl be dead in a few days in a few weeks of an infection, of a skull fracture from a caved in roof, will this girl be dead in a few months of dehydration or dysentery, will this girl be raped and killed in a few months a few weeks a few days by bands of looters or by soldiers from this country or from that country?

And yet here she is now alive fifteen sixteen seventeen years old, she does a little pirouette around, her arms spread wide as though to say, Look at it all, in wonder in amazement, her tie flaps as she turns, she is slim and graceful, how beautiful she is, this one unknown girl who yet does in fact have a name, and I wonder what it could be, who has a father and a mother, and I wonder where they are, who has a history and a language, a living mind and body, who has a future and a destiny, but what is that destiny and how long is that future?

The people come out slowly from the rubble along the street, the gutted buildings have chunks of debris before them and the men and women are covered with white dust and gray dust, but now there is something amazing

Someone is handing out water in bottles, someone is handing out medicine in packages, someone is handing out lunches in small white boxes, someone is handing out soap and white towels

And now someone is loading medical equipment onto a cargo plane, three men work together wearing bright

blue uniforms with orange tea shirts, wearing gray uniforms with yellow trim, wearing ochre field jackets with black trousers, they hand large heavy boxes to each other stacking them in the bay of the aircraft, they check the fastenings on their gear and portable equipment, they stand in straight rows hands behind their back taking instructions, they haul yellow plastic lockers of supplies onto dollies and drag them across the bright airfield toward the plane, it takes five men to move one of them

They are loading the air craft in Venezuela the aircraft in England the air craft in Taiwan the aircraft in Los Angeles, and the British men have pale angular faces they are quiet and grave, and the Venezuelan men have rounded faces they are talking and energetic, and the Taiwanese men have quiet thoughtful faces they are orderly and calm, and the American men have athletic determined faces they are moving forcefully across the tarmac

Someone is treating a woman who has fainted at an emergency shelter, the medic supports the back of her head and another takes her pulse, they are careful and precise, efficient and knowledgeable

Someone has pulled a young man from the collapsed hotel where he was trapped for 11 days, he is lying on an aluminum stretcher, there is a plastic oxygen mask on his face secured by a dark green band, an iv tube in one arm, a monitor clipped to one of his fingers, his clothes are covered with white dust, he is still alive now but what will he be in a week in a month in a year? why is there not more help, who has allowed this to go on?

It is night and the tents are pitched in the field on the edge of the city, the darkness cannot be seen through, it is like deep water, the rectangles of the tents are like tiles walling out the blackness of the field that

stretches out formless into the beyond of the tropical night, the feeling of the sea is everywhere, it is like is a kind of restlessness

There are small lights that illuminate the low maze of tents making their wedge-like openings amber and dim yellow, there is the smell of cigarette smoke sometimes, there is a flashlight beaming across, and mysteriously now there is laughter and even more mysterious still it is contagious laughter, and there are couples together very quietly in this tent and in that one and wry comments about it or shouted comments coarse and insulting with squalls of profanity and some fights just barely avoided, but for that everyone is too tired

There are soft voices and some cries low and continuous of women or of old men moaning in discomfort in pain – real, severe – and nothing to be done except the soothing voice of a daughter or of a son-in-law, there is the scream of a child every now and then, sharp and strident tearing through the dark's fabric

And the tent bandages shift slightly in the darkness, the body of humanity tries to heal itself in its still fevered rest, and far overhead the stars are numerous, the constellations shine clear and very low, as though one could reach up to touch them

How many people are gathered here now, thousands and thousands, and their voices low and restless troubled worried fill up the amphitheater of the silence all around, something is being prepared here, everyone can feel this but no one knows what it will be, something is being set in motion here, everyone can feel this, but no one can say where it will lead

But there is exhaustion, heavy as dust, as well, there is pain and thirst and fatigue, so much that one could never sleep, so great that one could never stay awake, and in fact at last everyone does sleep, the night takes in

the sleepers in their tents, the stars move over them
infinitely far away yet seeming to be very near, the
wind from the sea is steady low and fresh, strength
builds up among the people slowly despite
everything

And then it is morning, the sun of the deepest waters is
born far in the depths of the sky, the sun fills the sky
but it does so very slowly, and molten aluminum
pours through the strips of burnt paper that are the
palm trees

The palm trees stroke the sun's face, their mop heads wash
the sky's window, but it will not yet come clean,
bright clouds float in their soapy pail

People in the bright new sunlight are crowding, they are
wearing red shirts and blue, they are wearing the
bright colors of their island, they are crowding
around, they are feeling a new strength building up
inside of them, it is something new and yet it is very
old, it is something that no one understands and yet it
is something that all can understand

The people in the bright sunlight are crowding, they are
crowding in the streets and in the plazas, in the
courtyards and in the alleyways, they are crowding
on the steps of the public buildings, on the steps of
the university and in front of the police stations and
in front of the office buildings down town and in
front of the banks

They are crowding in front of the Presidential Palace, the
wind from the sea is building up with them, the palm
trees overhead move and pulse like hearts beating,
like clocks ticking, the sky streams with light, the
surging of the crowds has the feeling of the sea and
of the wind that flows through the plazas and the
streets through the corridors of the city through the
alleys and the squares the parks and the courtyards,

through the places where business is done and the places where decisions are considered, the places of the people as they come out of their tents and into the new city that is opening up in front of them

The people in the bright sunlight are crowding, they are wearing red shirts and dresses, they are wearing white and blue and green, they are wearing the colors of their island, their land, their world

And in another street the people are crowding restless, waiting for help that has not come yet and that will not be coming, and what has come so far has not been nearly enough and even now some of it has gone back to the untouched countries beyond the horizon, the horizon that is strangely bright, the sky that is strangely blue

And in another street the people are crowding milling around restless and waiting hungry thirsty and tired, the lampposts stand straight and untouched like some upright sticks left after a fire, and the people standing around waiting are like the charred remnants of a fire

The house has collapsed all around them, the buildings have fallen in the way that logs fall into themselves, and these people are the charred cinders left at the bottom, they exist in an intense knowledge now, it is like an aura that is all around them

Some walk past flowing through the square quickly as though on a march, and yet where are they going, there is nowhere to go, the fire that is burning here takes up everything, the fire that is burning here has become everything, it is this entire place itself, it is the streets that twist into each other, torn with cracks and fissures, half buried under quarries full of stone and concrete, it is the split apart buildings like calved icebergs, the blaze that is the lead green hills hazing with sunlight, the cumuli high above like columns of marble falling silently

The fire that is here has become everything, it screams up through the empty alleyways where there are only dogs, it cries out from the smashed storefronts from the open lips of the parched faces shouting up into the sky for water for the medicine that does not come for the bandages that are not there for the sutures the syringes the clean dressings and the antiseptic, and the fire that is here is invisible all around these survivors these charred remnants

See them walking through it, see how some of them open their arms wide as though greeting someone, some of them walking down the crowding streets opening their arms wide just to feel that they are alive, it is a nearly horrifying gesture and yet they do it anyway

Some of them open their arms wide embracing the light that fills the empty spaces of the streets the court yards the public squares the plazas, the light that is all around them that is not part of the fire, the light that is all around them that is separate from the fire

The light that is all around them fills them with a different splendor, how beautiful they are these charred remnants of people, these proven and hardened in the fire that is surging all around, that rages up from the mouths of the tortured men and women, that rages up from the babies dying of dehydration and dysentery, that rages up from the shanty towns shimmering beneath a crust of blinding aluminum, but the dark people the strong people the great people burned black and hardened in the fire walk through it

They are walking through the fire they are opening their arms wide they are embracing the light instead, the light that is not part of the fire that is burning all around them, it is almost intolerable to see, they do it anyway

And I am coming to see you

I am coming to see you in the destroyed city in the streets
of rubble in the emergency clinics and
I am coming to see you in the field of tents in the shanty
town of tin shacks that now is just a vast junk yard
And I am coming to see you in the remnants of buildings
where you congregate avoiding bands of looters
avoiding bands of soldiers, and I am coming to see
you in the public squares seething with crowds
seething with anger
For the awakening of the entire people, all souls of the
people all bodies of the people all minds of the
people, I am speaking to you
For the awakening of the entire people, all souls of the
people all bodies of the people all minds of the
people, I am writing to you
For the awakening of the entire people, all souls of the
people all bodies of the people all minds of the
people, I am sending you this message
I am writing to you from a distant country, it is not very far
away and yet it is very far
I am writing to you from a distant country, from where I
am seeing you, watching you, hearing about you
I am writing to you from a distant country, it is where I am
waiting for some news of you, waiting to find out
about you, waiting for your story

ENCAUSTICS

Rains come down amid blue marks of stars
Tearing their way into the blinded eyes
Spread to the gray horizon where all hope is lost
And where the travelers must make their way

Heating their pork and beans above sternox,
A guttered cigarette stuff found, smoothed out
To a certain standard of fastidiousness,
One cannot be too careful, or too poor.

Too poor, or poor at all, was once my laugh,
The stock in trade of all my canned humor,
And then I realized there was no jest:

The powers that retained the real power
And kept at price of murder for themselves
Were absolutely serious. I was dumbstruck.

Throw all my writings in the toilet. Flush.
Yes there's no profit there. The glass of dreams
Was broken in my hands. My wrists were cut.
And cut quite badly. I could not survive.

Instead I walked out past the old gas house,
The ghosts of others following behind.
Where was I leading them, or they driving me?
Into the forest far from any word.

There we will sit around the fire we make
From an old fifty-five gallon drum --
You know the kind. A bunch of bums.

Poems passed around by firelight
Will be our private and unknown reward.
The wind will comment in the leafless trees.

Shower the prizes on the imbeciles,
Give to the covetous the coveted;
Bury me in the fallen shroud of snow,
Wasting no money on either cloth or priest.

Giving to Caesar everything that's his,
And that's a lot, watch the evening news.
I'll not be seen or heard from, empty
Attempt that faltered in the northern wind,

A scarecrow trying gamely to bestride its field.
What was my field? I could never know.
Bright coins of sunlight littering the pond

Drowned all my senses through my sucking eyes.
The drowning man does not know left from right
Nor up from down, and is not of this world.

Blow all my kisses through the pool's keyhole.
I will not join the party just right yet,
But I'll be there in spirit, floating, perhaps,
Face down. Lord all the absolutely pretty girls!

The pool is like a drain the clouds themselves
Will be sucked down into, white maelstrom
Of white sepulchers, the really airtight deals
Of ancient, sun-bright and once-fabled days.

The green leaves of the world eluded me.
I took a wrong turn. Looking in the roots,
Finding only oil-armored beetles,

Intricate and poisonous spiders,
And the pouring freezing rain whose nailing drops
Fixed me to the bottom of that leafy pile.

Bring both my balls together like an hourglass,
Bright grains running one into the other –
Make me my own time clock: oblige me now –
Insert the much-marked card of your smooth tongue,

Right between the globed retorts: your time
Is stamped as well, perhaps as much as mine.
Get on with it. The boss might soon arrive.
Not working is not eating it is said.

Not working is not living: my pastime soon.
O my gold-white virgin rapt in veils of cloud,
A dozen unicorns attending you,

Hacked Venus' own armpits glistening
In crystal streams beneath Hellenic sun,
Give me a blowjob before my day is done.

Green soldiers where all do you come from?
Your white trash spilling from the kitchen pails,
Your yard birds kicked around and kicked around,
And now you're one yourself. What do you think?

Not much, but even though the pay's not great –
Hey -- those benefits they can't be beat.
Five hundred doctors rush to salve your burns,
All third degree. Your blindness too is healed

Or maybe not exactly, but there's therapy,
Including psycho, and then lots of drugs:
Pills and injections, all of it for free:

The green leaves falling to the doctors' yards,
And to the contractors. But with your piece
Of brain, such as it is...well, what can we say?

August Fidel, your revolution still!
I believe it will come north at last,
The slop trough of the market will dry up
And all the small investors get real thin.

Lots of whoring then. Sharpened *mujeres*
Of the business age will look around
And look around some more, some on the street
And others floating high in penthouse Demerol.

Then all the slicked and blow-dried salesmen
Will think what they can do in a like way,
Fingering the foreskins they don't have --

Courtesy of Mom and American MDs.
Got to have at least nine inches though.
Oh well. Hope well-polished apples will work out.

Flower of women, you of black silk night
Draped with your mantilla lace of stars,
How you mimic all the tracteries of dreams,
Vermouth and opium your rank injustice.

O my white flower of the neon streets,
Where has the rebus of the free market
Positioned you in, as it were, the larger scheme?
Luminous hemorrhage of night's artery,

Outside the blinds, lipstick, perfume washed down
Into the rain-soaked gutter of white sheets,
Where, beneath the tent-like playful dark,

Only your two cat's eyes are visible.
What are they saying as I fuck you blind?
That our two times are passing, slow, but fast.

The bush's burning hair is caught between
Two ink-blue alleyways where rain comes down
In megaphones of pinpricks: lilac light;
Frying the reptilian surface of the street.

You cannot live long within the cankered tree.
However high you climb, that shadow drags
A wet blanket weighing down your reach.
The fire between your legs will melt to ash,

Like the snowman: he just watered down.
No flame was sweating him, it must have been
Genetics; yes his father was the exact same way.

Florrie was telling me on the phone, you know
How she is; you can't shut her up, but then one day
Snow crystals, no matter what you do, will clarify.

Streets of gray houses, yellowing and drab,
And olive drab men patrolling up and down;
Assault rifles and grenades, plastic bullets
Possibly, and all this called 'the troubles';

A windscreen at a checkpoint where we're stopped
Reflects in tinted glass the children's game
That's dyed into their khaki uniforms –
Puzzles locked with puzzles, water, clouds, fish.

The men are there indeed, slide forward off
The window's convex bubble, parting
Like a theatre curtain pulled on both our sides.

The sun comes through much like a bullet hole
With shrapnel ingots scattered here and there.
Money and danger slide off one more time.

The green veins in the adder's tiled skin
Have an oiled sheen, a visceral fire.
Turning themselves around to find their tail,
Leaving the outside of themselves behind,

Unlike the woven carpets of the birds
That cannot change themselves so much,
They draw themselves to earth and to its hearth
That takes them down into its black retort,

Again and yet again; arrow headed lighting
Of the parted ground. The gorgon is not mistress
But is overwhelmed by you, her seaweed brains

Bickering among themselves and snapping
At the shadows of the sun. Yet serpents all
Have gun barrel eyes, defeating all the criminals of earth.

A giant arbor woven of live birds,
This was what he dreamed – their eyes like agates,
Their yellow feet like barbed and tangled wire
Or like barreled crabs grappling each other,

Their feathers aquamarine and turquoise,
Indigo, and sharp obsidian black,
Yet woven is not really the right word,
Inter-tangled, necks all corkscrewed around,

Speaking to each other, not jabbering,
But prophesying human absolute decay,
More-than-decadence, total destruction.

In my drug-inspired sober dreams,
And yet they were not dreams, this much I knew:
I knew that it was absolutely real.

The glass-dripped frozen and warm ice
Coats all the branches of the apple trees,
Even the crab-apples are ice-wet tough;
Hardly any weight on the limbs at all,

Despite the weight of ice and the low boughs
That almost touch circling the squirrel-tracked snow.
Bright and warming sun above, ice melting fast,
And soon the apples will be ice-pulp cold,

Like some Italian ice, but nobody will buy.
Way, way too cold: “freeze all my teeth,” as my
Grandmother used to say, before the home,

Its bedpans and urine catheters,
Morphine and Prozac, and anti-rheumatoid drugs,
As she died searching memory not there.

The skin upon his hands is loosening;
He is becoming an old man; surprising fate.
I didn't think that he would last forever,
But the suddenness, as it seems, dismays me.

His hair is turning gray, his skin is creased;
To think he used to be a handsome man –
Not his own idea, many others said;
I must admit that he was flattered and then some.

Counting the minutes, counting up the days,
Does age take time away or does it give? –
The avenues, the streets, the alleyways,

Unlit pathways, the unguessed stopping points,
Though none of them stayed in for very long,
May offer their curious unknown vantages.

Yellow straw is windy in the fields.
The faces of lost friends are hiding there,
Showing themselves in flickers like brief flames,
And at the far horizon there is smoke.

Kill me or do not kill me, for I am dead,
A revenant who walks the burnt-out world
That promised stacks of golden wheat as high
As any house and apples in the autumn suns.

None of it could come to pass; it was not
That it didn't, but it never could have done.
This was the crow's flight that I didn't see.

The grass was thick and tangled in my path
With opalescent dew; and yet I didn't see
The green tripwire and the flowered snares.

My one-time mother, maybe 35, playing
Statues with us on the cottage yard:
She'd swing us around then gently let us go.
We'd stumble or pretend to but not fall,

And whatever shape we happened to set in
That was the one we had to stay set in;
We were the statues and she had to guess
What kind of statues we both were. Quite hard,

Or maybe not so very, since our repertoire
Was limited – Mercury that I'd somehow learned in
school,

And all the usual monsters – it was fall,

And Halloween approaching and all that.
But mother was remarkably astute;
She recognized us even through our shapes.

Mother gathered pinecones in the fall,
Perhaps an odd thing to be doing, but
She had a method to her madness: she made wreathes.
Making a wire frame for the whole thing,

With painstaking and time-consuming work
She fashioned out a wreath of dun pinecones
And then spray-painted it with gold or with some
Spangly-edged white of yuletide frost.

It was amazing, the enjoyment she got from it.
But it wasn't her alone. All of us,
Even if we left the making of these things to her,

Helped her outdoors on weekends; we made
An outing, with bags of sweet apples, crackers, cheese,
Scouting the ground for the prettiest fallen cones.

One time I caught a school of silver bass.
They are not difficult to catch – the dumbest fish,
But still I was quite proud: an outdoor klutz,
I was quite pleased with my whole catch.

Some of them were in the water still
And some of them were in my galvanized pale.
They did not act like regular caught fish,
Logy, half-dead already, they barely stirred.

Even the ones still in the water hovered
Near the surface, moving super slow
And like the slightly dipping wings of planes.

They are not good to eat. They were dying.
Catching them was useless, wasteful, stupid.
Mother looked at them, at me, and sadly smiled.

One afternoon at the cottage I was floating on my back,
Mother coaching gently how to float better
By relaxing my body more; at first I was too tense
And quickly sank, but then I slowly learned to shape
myself
Into the water's buoyancy and small gentle waves.
I became part of them and they part of me.
Mother looked on watching, saying nothing.
And then, after what seemed a quite long time,

I actually floated on my back without floundering.
The day was brilliant, the sky so deep and blue,
And then a strange thing happened, looking up

I asked her what the highest number
You could count to was. She said it just went on and on. I
couldn't understand.
It gave me a strange feeling; and I was silent for quite a
while.

On Saturdays my mother would make stew,
Beef stew with carrots, peas, and tiny onions –
Diced, and tender beef, potatoes so soaked
In meat sauce gravy they almost tasted

Like beef chunks themselves, a scent
That was an aroma, the whole house filled with it,
Sharp, warm, welcoming, and pepper-spiced,
With onions sliced, translucent and acid-sweet.

There was an entire world in this one pot,
The garden grew its produce just for it,
And all the bread the bakers of the town

Could bake couldn't soak up the flavors of the broth.
This really was the world. The windows steamed,
And mother had to use two hands to stir her pot.

Old age is like a curdling of the self,
A deep contraction of the viscera,
A rank cheese curd that smells,
Squeaking its comments and complaints,

There is such small mind left, less memory,
And no capacity to grasp another's plight,
Not even plight, just dog turd-size problems
Overwhelm the self's empathic light.

What is the point of living to old age?
It maybe true that some can make it work,
Remain productive, most of all spirited,

But these are rare exceptions; the most
End up in rank and urined, arthritic beds,
Or floating in alzheimer's mescaline.

The rain is on the windowpane so hard,
Its hammering sounds like loose rocks
Raining on a stretched-tight paper bag; the melting snow
Has shrunk to islands, and the grass is yellow green.

Not really yellow green, but streaks and constellations
Here and there, it's hard and yet important
For me to get this right; just like the wind
Is blowing, yet not heavy on the pane,

It doesn't rattle it, but every now and then
The glass vibrates. Tokens of raw power,
And the world is full of them, small samples

Of the overwhelming earth and what it might
Do if the forces congregated just the way
They need to: everything and everyone would be destroyed.

At some point when quite young I realized
That everyone despised me. I was not bad;
The opposite in fact. I did just
Exactly what I was told to do, always.

Yet still they hated me because they knew
That I was more intelligent than they,
To put it tactfully. This was the thing
That really really got to them in spades.

The dumb fucks are a cinch to get along;
They do what they are told. They don't know why.
They do it anyway. They are the world.

But every so often someone comes along
Who doesn't see the point, not that they can't,
But they don't see the point of what's the point.

My mother's face is like a marigold –
Red hair just slightly orange, and very round.
A two-dimpled smile and an under lip
That goes from thoughtful happy to just thoughtful.

Marigolds of all flowers are compact,
Vivid yet hidden in themselves,
Low to the ground as though not to be seen,
And yet they're always seen because they're orange.

What is a color? Is it something that the world
Is opening within our gaze? Or is it something
That our gaze fills out into the emptiness of space?

Or is it something half between the two?
A melding of the human eye and space, learning, fusion,
And, as all painters would say, a type of love.

The cave born artist brings forth memory,
Carrying the lion pelt of night
Into the copper vessels of the moon;
The half-moon sails from its green canvas tent

That burns up like an anchor in brown salts,
Softening bones of sailors in the dream-stretched arc
Where starry hulls are filled with gold mainsails
By all four of the corner-judging winds.

The hydras of stilled seven seas burn oily black,
And fireballs of tankers mushroom the sea's
Dark forest floor; above, the spinning globes

Of telepathic stars see with empty ears
And hear with blinded eyes, melting each gold coin
To seal up the cross-boned infant's mind.

The calyx of the lilies' holy scent
If filled with flashing water, and the sky is blue
With green reflections of the newest grass;
The light of two moons holds the silent sun.

The stars are stilled within the burnt-out bones
The zodiac has sequestered in its fire
Where the taxidermied influence of light
Has stricken every set and every stage.

A dry and emptied wave cannot bring forth
The salt shells of the old night's tides;
The tines of the god's forks cannot bear it.

The tines of all the forks squeak empty plates,
And all the unburned locks open the sea
To fill all heavens with no flood or air.

The burnt up streets are filled with bones of dogs or men,
Blue grease is smeared along the gutters, and the fires
smoke:
Walking of no walking, sight of no sight, hearing only
What should not be heard. Blood and drowning

In the bloody pond with floating body parts. It is not good
to see.
A head was javelined on a twisted street sign; it seemed to
sing:
It's mouth was opened in an oval shape, but no sound of
course,
Blood was streaked deep red blue along its torn shirt.

A truck was overturned near the donut shop, the shop's
glass smashed;
People were hungry after all. There was a giant flower,
A sunflower running with antic root-gate down the street,

Squeak squeak squeak it seemed to say or squeal,
It was an oddly loquacious sunflower. It was
Running after me; I ran; it ran. And then I woke, yet it was
not a dream.

Leave off my memories of times long past.
I cannot bear the thought of them – the girls
Who tortured every inch of me and blew
The moon-dark candle of the window's kiss.

My strength might heal eventually or not.
Conrad at my age had a sort of breakdown,
Took to his bed and staring at the wall,
Speaking to no one but his characters.

I am not famous nor was meant to be.
Anti-depressants, Xanax...how I'd love
Some opium or even plain old grass.

Unfortunately, my drug connections
Are as non-existent as my publishing.
How much Ambien would it take to kill?

When the yellow corn seeds of the floating moon
Came falling down like green rain on the lake,
And waves of corn silk cresting current white
Broke through the night sky's checkered dress of stars,

I knew that one thing couldn't last that long; the film
I saw at the old smelly theatre back when; I knew
It couldn't last. Black grapes handed to me by a servant
All in yellow djeleba told me the single thing.

Like Elmore James, I know my time ain't long.
It is a simple though not a painless change.
It can't be made the latter, since the mirror's hand

Must reach out for you, fingering your shirt,
A pointless gesture or a sinister one.
Perhaps it hardly makes a difference which.

The houses of the north country catch the sun.
The burning light reflecting on flashings
Of the chimneys and white gutters of the roofs,
White arcs and discs of sun-flare float in windowpanes,

Inhabitants, the humans, pass in and out through doors,
Sometimes alone and sometimes in small groups,
Or sometimes larger ones; the humans wear pieced,
Woven coverings – clothes they refer to them –

Except at times when they appear to wash themselves
And then at other times, whose purposes we have not
Ascertained. There is a strange lability about these
creatures.

Often social, cooperative, they nonetheless
Are subject to violent episodes. It is something
That remains to be explained, though its
implications seem grave.

If one street lightning miracling the rain
Would make the folded sky a torn cloth,
The sand grain marks that spider web the sun
Would follow down the stormed foot-printed lake.

The dove of peace will bring three sticks of war
And one will be the omened willow branch
Stripping its tea leaves from the thick green vein
To pair its swollen arteries for blood.

America, the benefactor's land
Where shit is pushed out before the seat can fall,
How many nights will you come count the stars,

Before the sunny side of Dow will crack?
Beyond the pine green hills where hunting licenses
Flap the plaid jackets of the hay-made men.

The candles multiplied a thousand times
Light up the luminous boxwood rounded tent
And draw the owls and the sucking mouths
Of every insect in the circled stand.

But there's a reason for the many lights.
Prayers of the oak wood and the Christian one.
The nearly untouched land is still holy,
Even though bulldozed down the road a piece.

Money of the banks and for the bankers –
Ever notice how polite they are?
Even when they know by looking at you

That you don't have a dime. I am the tallest
gentleman, he said,
In my gray suit and in my shiny shoes
And sleep inside the four winds of the world.

The burning road crowded with bomb craters
And blue rainbow gasoline flooded in the holes
That marked the sides and center of the road –
Zig-zag patterns. Where were we in our dream?

The man with one eye ripped and hanging down,
With blood both flowing and coagulated black,
Asked us for water. We didn't know his language
But somehow we knew what he was asking us.

Three severed limbs were lying in the road.
But they, we knew, were from different bodies:
One was from a child, a small leg, almost like a doll's,

The other two were men, but one was stout
And covered with quarts and quarts of blood.
The other one was just a severed head.

Light upon light together with darkness
Collecting shadows that must group themselves
Around a central core of showered life,
Falling around you like a flowing stream,

Except that it is not one but the open day
Bearing its gift of happiness to some,
Bearing its burden of misery to others,
(They always say what different lives men have.)

And so the day is open, is the day,
And anything can happen in a day –
Even a day can happen in a day.

But some things are forbidden, such as night,
And some things are enjoined, though we can't say.
Some things are imperative, impossible to say.

This rose of roses, a light of deepest dye,
Daily we put you in a glass of water,
For it is only this way that we hold your life
And keep it near us, pointing us the way.

Dante in paradise beheld the Rose,
But even his transcendent power of mind
Could not do just to the thing he saw,
For he had seen a miracle, given

To few and fewer mortals of the earth:
A light of roses and a rose of light,
Its petal angels rising to the heights

Where mortal vision cannot penetrate,
Where mortal thought is lost in radiance
And where the mind is stricken beyond light.

Beauty of roses, more than beautiful,
Opening anemones of red or white –
And yet your center can't be found;
Petal on petal, nothingness is there,

Except a whirlpool around a crown of gold,
A small crown, since your kingdom is so small –
Kingdom of beauty, smallest that there is,
Or else it is the largest in the world.

Though yet that seems unlikely, ugliness
And cruelty break their swords upon the night;
It's difficult to say which one's the worst.

And yet the rose, its silky soft curved petals –
Delicate, defenseless – has remained so long.
Such things have triumphed, will continue to.

The yellow scotch pours from the drunken moon.
It smiles and then it staggers in the sky,
A man with just a head, black tuxedo made of stars,
Two oak root hands that reach into the sea

And hold the harbor's mud, as black as oil
Or a black onyx ring, the ring they took off Jesus
When he died. The black sky broke into a shit earthquake,
The moon was a violet purple like a bruise,

And blood like hemorrhages of Jupiter you see
On maps of boys' rooms when they think
That they'll be scientists instead of truck drivers,

Or possibly much worse, though I don't know
If you can get much very worse than that.
The traffic's violence soaks blood without cease.

Round breasts of women and their skin so soft,
Black silken perfume flowing from their dresses,
Slim white melting candles in their panties
Warming their two legs like drift wood branches

Gathered from a beach, blue green of copper
Flickering the room and soft red lights
That do not mean what others think they do:
You are the virgin of the fireplace,

Holy of holies, yet without your clothes.
Radiantly naked you are even more precious.
This is your real self; the webbing of the streets

No longer holds you in its dusty threads,
Full of amber sucked dry moths, the dead
That still can shiver, all just barely, in the wind.

Green fire in the frozen apple trees
Floods the hoarfrost grass with white deer eyes
That widen deeply through star-clouded nights
And slowly turn to green and then to brown.

The heart the beats inside the pockmarked earth
Is torn up by their hooves; farmers kill them,
Preferring the white shield of the winter moon.
And I have seen their bodies gutted blue.

The other frozen eyes that populate the night
Are waiting for their lashes to unthaw
Like snow-iced eaves of roofs; then ripen soft

As berries in the summer of the year –
Multitudes of eyes, green, deep red and black,
Some small, some human, some wide as the entire night.

Loosing your laughter to the sunburnt wave,
I followed the blond the hayricks of the moon
That lead me through the purple countryside
Etched with huge stars, the broken boughs of light.

They let us ride a long time in the back.
Where was the driver? where was anyone?
The girl who lay beside me was all soft
And golden in the moon, and warm;

Then gradually she got so hot the hay
Was starting to burn brown and black, much like
A cigarette, but there was no flame.

Her eyes were green as grass, her teeth
Were brown as dried corn cobs. I had to get away,
But she wrapped me in her long arms as I slept.

When I close my eyes I see my dreams
Of black space and of deeper night
Full of the tall trees standing round my bed.
Their leaves are showered down on me

As I look up through the charred branches
Like squid tentacles, lesions up and down,
And then a white frost coats the tree with webs
And I am taken into its black arms.

Although I am absorbed by the wood grain,
It feels warm inside. I see green particles like stars
And dim blood vessels branching through the wood's

Increasingly soft and porous living mesh.
And then there were green eyes that opened, closed,
Then opened even wider once again, and closed.

A moment works in enigmatic ways,
Gone as soon as there, the lighted room
Holding the door between us open just
And then just closing it in an instant more.

A look is not enough, the body must be there
And yet it is in only the most nebulous way,
A structure that you half remark within,
Around yourself, a moving thing –

And yet what is motion? Here, and there,
Moments intervene and yet do not convey,
Only I convey – my hand, my arm, my leg –

But what is that – convey? Gathering
A dual momentum in itself, half to change,
The other half to stay, the body peripherally, dimly gathers
mind.

Mother was not all so bad, when I
Came home from training at the Y
She 'd have the stove crowded with simmering pots,
Brown roast turkey was ready in the oven, glazed

With olive oil, and peas and rice were steam-cooked
On the stove. What did I appreciate? Nothing.
I thought it all was owed to me by right.
Later I found out all quite differently.

And yet mother was by no means a saint;
At twelve she slashed me with a wire hanger
Across the calves; I was wearing short pants –

It all was quite amusing in a way;
She chased me round the whole front of the car,
Cornered me, then lashed me half-a-dozen times.

Ma started poor but then at last got rich,
She seemed to think this was her due, it was
America after all, land of the free,
If you weren't making it, you weren't doing it.

Now why wasn't it happening for you?
You must be lazy, or on booze or drugs,
Or maybe you just fuck too much all day.
The Lord rewards the virtuous in time.

Ma was not a sympathetic type,
In this she was the typical USer,
Someone got a problem, it's their fault,

Don't bother me with their shit, I got mine;
They say that a fire will destroy the world,
A fire set by man, the heart of man.

Mother was just nuts about Christmas.
Thanksgiving did it for her too, but not
Like Christmas and its eve when Santa Claus
Would, at some secretly appointed time,

Come down the chimney, right into the furnace.
And how his reindeer would have jammed themselves
Down through the narrow chimney of our house
I really had no notion. But it's faith.

It's faith that keeps the world spinning around,
And keeps the golden kruggerands in flight
Stuffed into Santa's brown bag that at times

Does double duty to dispense with all
The small and startlingly thin and short
Brown people of the world. Just like stay cats.

Christmas was the time that mother loved the most,
Wrapping up presents for us by the ton –
Blue, gold, and green and red and candy-striped;
I always shook the ones that might have toys.

Shooed from the bedroom where she kept them all,
I wondered and dream-fantasized my loot.
I seldom thought of others, though sometimes
Budding consideration was arching through my heart.

Grandmother in the kitchen made cookies,
It seemed a hundred kinds set out on sheets.
And then the Christmas tree, natural of course,

Smelling of outdoors and of sticky pine –
Each year a different color. "Do you want a gold tree
This year kids? How about a blue? we haven't had
that kind for a while."

My mother loved to decorate the Christmas tree.
She made a whole big ritual of it; Christmas music,
The Nutcracker, of course, maybe a drink of two for her
To get into the mood a little more,

And after I was old enough maybe one for me.
My favorite was always Tom and Jerry's,
Which my father duly made; but for the best
You had to go down to the Crystal restaurant

Where Joe and Leo – Joe tall, thin, hooked nosed –
Italian looking, although he was Greek, and Leo
His brother, short and bald, and looking like a German
monk,
Although he too was Greek of course – and well
They had the best in town. Sometimes my father
Let me take it with some booze, a little, once or twice.

Once when I was five I stole money from the Church.
This was how it happened. In those days
You had an envelope you sealed your quarter in.
Well, I don't know what got into me -- I took mine out.

I bought so much candy at the corner store
The son who worked the place was losing his patience:
"Come on, come on, I don't have all day." "Okay I'll have
Some gum drops and a watermelon slice
and...and...and..."

And so I gluttonized the whole white bag-full
On the side porch steps; I don't know how they found me
out.
They seldom went either in or out that way.

But then, as it happened, it was time for my bath that night:
My mother was absolutely furious. It was only a quarter,
but still...
"That was God's money," she screamed at me, and hit me
hard with the back of her hair brush.

Mother hated Jews, or if not hate
She didn't trust them further than a needle's point.
You heard it in her voice from time to time
Whenever she had cause to mention them.

Blacks weren't too much higher on her list,
But it was my grandmother who really feared them most.
And fear was what it was; their mocha skin
To her was just the height of *contra naturam*.

She used to say ‘Don’t look at them too long’
Sometimes when we found ourselves in Syracuse.
My mother went one better, "Don’t look at all."

For myself, half my heroes were Black guys: Hendrix,
The raised fists of the Panthers at the Mexico Olympic
games,
And most of all Ali, Ali, Ali. I write his name three times, a
mortal god.

You cannot see past the glass of time
With all its piled and half-melted ice.
The bourbon of the world will eat it through,
The alcohol of the world eat you as well.

Me, I prefer benzodiazepines,
Xanax and valium and all that stuff –
No hangover with them, just make you sleep,
But sleep is what I need – insomnia:

Anxiety is like a cancer growing inside of you,
Leukemia let's say, the symptoms for
A long time barely there, and then one day they are.

And that's your day. And everybody has one,
It is written in the book that Mohammed wrote,
Among the Buddhists, in the Bible. Yet are you merely
dust?

Some people always have a quite hard time,
They don't fit in and everybody knows,
Especially their teachers and parents
(Hard to say which are their worst enemies.)

These days of course, there are lots of drugs.
I wanted once to fuck a school teacher,
A special ed. instructor – the retard class –
Called herself “an educator” of course.

So one day she was telling me she'd had
A really really bad one: these two boys –
They're almost always boys. (I wonder why.)

Had clearly been without their meds, their dope,
Ritalin it mostly is, I think, an upper,
But with a paradoxical effect – it slows them down, until
they're nice and calm.

The scent of your body is more a kind of warmth,
And if it is a scent it's like a fruit
Warmed on a windowsill in the summer sun
Still carrying the smell of soil or of vines and leaves,

Still carrying the freshness of the air itself
Saturated with the warmth of the hot sun,
A sun so different from the half-shaded sill,
Filled with a power, even with a threat.

Yet what could your body be if not a threat?
Graceful in movement, and yet watchful too.
Watchful in every part and every limb,

Filled with the power of a gaze, a sun itself,
A gaze with its own luminous dark touch
That tenderly traces, traces, yet can't leave things whole.

The yellow half-moon slides into your smile
And watermelon seeds are in your teeth.
You spit them out but green vines with zucchini
Grow in their place. Your breasts are two peaches.

Not that big but round and soft and warm
And juicy firm, flowing with honey, sugar, spice,
And every breath you take is like a menthol
Cigarette, fragrant, poisonous and warm.

Not poisonous totally but not really safe –
How dangerous your touches are to me,
Even the slightest ones; a mere soft slide

Along my forearm gives me all tingles.
It's women that should have these things, not men,
Yet I'm a man. And you, just what are you?

The book that flutters through the pages of the sun
Reaches its tendrils through the bluest space,
Loading gold filaments of heat and light
With yellow flowers, with red grapes and plums.

The apple that seduced Eve banished here,
The hanging gardens of the thunderheads
Drop seeds of burning rain into the lake
That shines like silver through the summer night.

The steps that aim the sun across the sky
Left hieroglyphic markings on the daylight moon
And empty sockets where five eyes had been.

Yet crumble the moon into my waiting palms,
My sun will burn as bright as any day
In winter when white wheat is combed by wind.

What marks the soil before the root of day,
And then what brings the salamander up
Into the fire of the arcing sun? –
The power of all light beyond the light.

The depth of day must have its root in earth,
But what can be the earth? Hairless bipeds,
Not predators exactly but worse, fools,
Have taken clitoris and testicle to bank.

The hairless dog will run through the wide hills,
Barking its torment to the greening wind
And not a single veterinary quack

And not a single human one will help.
White houses made of wood, set far apart,
Mimic the main white house that floats above.

When I am dead, then there'll be nothing left,
Not my body, though it had a good start –
But it got derailed. Injuries.
So then that leaves my writing. What a laugh.

Emily Dickinson's one sister in-law
Discovered all her poetry, all nice and neat,
Preserved it, understood it, saw what it was,
And tried to get it published, and then did.

But what was that blue fly saying when she died?
You live a pointless life. It's over now.
No one will see this shit. Your letter to the world.

Unless the world changes hugely, it's not interested.
But the world did change, and then more and more.
But what can change it now, is there anything?

Print every Sutra on a grain of rice,
Make every Bible of a bamboo tree.
The clouds move spectrally across the sky,
As though from west to east or east to west.

The sun is still amid the sky; the earth has stopped,
The numbers racing on are now faces
That have the eyes, the noses, the cheekbones
Of each other; like shadows in a room.

And then the dreams of napalm came to me,
Dreams of white phosphorous. And needle
Fragmentation ordinance that the Israelis use.

Sun of the tiger fur of fields striped with gold,
And wine dark red, we will be there one day,
With golden daffodils floating here and there.

The angels of the lord move up and down
The gold and turning ladder of the sun;
Life is the diamond ring, or maybe jade,
But death is the coveted and black onyx prize.

Death is the panther in the dark room
That you cannot see; death is the powder,
Purest white, you contemplate, it's the loss
Of everything you have achieved, the thought

Of everything you failed to achieve, the dream
Of everything you wanted but could not,
The mirror showing you the wrinkled skin,

The photograph showing you drought-spidered earth,
Death, of your desire to go there and to do;
Death your final indolence, your lack of home.

The fire in your hair is just a trick
Of smoke and mirrors, mostly smoke;
The edges of the sun that burn along your eyes
Make the fire of your hair that much more bright.

Perhaps you cannot feel it; but you know.
You have been on fire all your life.
Your life has been a thing that you've consumed,
It has shown you the way to immolation.

Beauty of suicide, our principle. We'll dive
Into the deep pool both at once, together
And alone, as it must be; but even if alone,

Still not desperate, committing an act of
Purity and self-commitment, beyond what
Anyone can think or say, purest integrity.

The roses on the garage's espalier
Are yellow roses, always my favorite;
Now I say farewell to things that do not fare,
Whether well or ill. They are the things of earth.

They have no mind that we know of, no destiny;
Fate must come from deep presentiment
And this from deep within self-sensing mind.
Unless the roses in their swirled darkness

Can delicately sense themselves somehow.
They always have been the strangest of all flowers.
Ply upon ply of darkness, silken, obscure,

An image of what some of us must be,
Even if privately, and therefore all,
Except that some must do it instantly.

Green berries burgeon in the hill's blue heart
Beneath a sky where burning white clouds drift,
Invisible cicadas' tuning fork
Of heat, the world so still, radiant and calm;

The visible insignia of light
Spark on green domes crumbling, awash;
Rising heat shimmer in the bright field's midst –
Resonating tines, small voices sing.

A yellow filter set across the world,
Sun blaze is steeping time in fragrances;
Walking I am there, and I am here,

My step uncertain in the stiff current
Of grasses tangled, dry, woven, breaking
All around me as I drag them forward.

The clarity of space this afternoon
As all of sunlight fills the summer's world –
Warm smell of light on dusty bricks
From the old chimney dumped in a ditch of vines.

Four of us play at killing horse flies.
Board slats painted across a red brown mare –
Beyond a ways there is a dark stable,
Above the stable, steep sky pounds with heat.

A sky of fathomless light blue above,
A white rim of mid-day down near the hill –
And the sun burns right into our necks

As we take the blue flies and the green flies
That are like pieces, chips of bright metal,
Smashing these fragments of sun between two bricks.

Father took me to the boat house once,
We spent the evening fixing the engine.
Fumes from it made a white heavy fog
That settled just above the water line.

We moved about in a toxic sun mist,
The engine like a hot stove between us,
Covering our faces with our shirts –
I passed tools to a voice without a face.

Crouching underneath the smog we put
Sharp questions tapped out on metal pipes
To fellow prisoners – wheels, gears and belts,

Then father sent me out to get fresh air,
And I wondered how long he'd stay in there,
Trapped in poisonous fumes and machinery.

The rain is needles in the black-sheathed night
That's broken into stars like a piranha's jaws;
The endless throat and tunnel of space-time
Is poised to swallow the green fate of earth.

The man upon a ledge looks up, not down;
He looks into the blackness where the streaks
Of star-seeds blossom into red, and where
He will be going if he has the balls.

Darkest celestial night, deep cave of fate,
Unknown, unknowable diverticula
Leading the whole way. Or are they following?

And you the draughtsman of your scoop of light
In which you neither lead, nor which you follow,
The melting light that is your unknown life.

THE DAY IS GREEN

You, now, arising, unfolding roses of incense,
Scented light dawning in the temples of the sun –
Harmony spread everywhere through lilac tints of dawn,
Light changed to silent prayer, prayer to wings of light.

Sampan sail through your Chinese name,
Delicate boats afloat on rivers of deep green
Carrying all earthly goods to rainy markets,
On sun-filled labyrinths, to the quiet of safe harbors.

The brilliant overflowing white subtropical sun
Burning in the water, walking steadily inland,
Bronzing your ancestors' faces multiplied to yours –

Woman of many women, of so many streams and paths,
Woman from so far away, the other side of earth;
The compass rose that blossoms in your heart points only to
the realms of love.

If a smile is a type of light, your face is radiance itself.
Dark trees by roadside, their smooth black arteries,
Starred seaweed surging in the water's pulse
Where the gold eye of the moon's tossed coin blinks shut –

Lost somewhere there, although we don't recall.
For it was long ago, before the embers of the earth
Were turned to white ash blown away to stars,
Before the smoldering grate was twinkling in the dark.

Distance between us, but the braided bough of dreams
Will bring us wheat and pomegranate seeds, white rice
As pure as snow, the bread of silent soft communion,

And whitest wax for candlelight; and surely
Flowers, flowers for these candles to give forth,
If only those that also, also are a type of light.

Burning leaves, in the midst of them a nest –
Hollow of silken gray, cigar ash delicate,
Holding out amid liquid flame that pulses,
Reaching upward toward a place where you and I

Can never go. Where is that place? What is the core
That hides itself inside the burning heart? Desire
Is the overflow of everything we are,
But is it in the heart of fire or is it

In the deep reserve, beneath the whirlpool
And the turbulence: the honeycomb's recess,
Within the quiet of two sheltered lives

That gather willow branches, green and cool,
Supple and distilling healing essences,
And thus a temporary shelter from the fire?

The stream, the budded weeds of yellow lace
That reach into the chrome-like discs of sun,
The wobbly jigsaws of the sky, above the dusty cords
That reach down through the clouded amber dark –

You will recall these portents from the water.
For you are sunlight-borne and move above
The green and yellow brown, the chestnut flows
Of silty maelstroms, their queens Anne's lace of foam.

You'll skirt and even float above all these,
Borne by the sun that brought you
From the bright green typhoon country of your birth

Its high white sun burning against the blue,
Filling rice fields with its flashing gold,
The light you carry, like a halo, all around you.

Land of golden temples and egg markets in the morning,
Where cream-filled cakes are sold from small blue carts
And where vermilion incense wands are like cattails
In bronze cauldrons of white ash, white as any beach;

The bluest sky above, and more than blue, burning down
Into the secrets of the lotus pond, there where
You spread your smile from sunlight's shards of gold;
And yet your smile's not gold, but perfection of all white –

White as your thoughts, as well your lone hours, innocent
And tending always toward the others, those you put
Before yourself, those you greet with laughter

Of a thousand prayers, the liveliest embraces,
Inexhaustible charity proceeding from your heart
Of purest hearts, of sunlight, open skies, of honesty and
work.

In the dark wood where I lost my way I broke a leaf
And placed it to my lips – cool, moist and veined
And smelling of the fields, of the trees, their pleated
Scab-like dusty bark as full of maze-like paths

For ants and licorice-colored beetles opening
Their mandibles along green branches and their
Waving feelers in tall wrist-tickling, wind-wavering
Long grass. The path was streaks of grease, black oil

Shone amethyst in a moonlit puddle in a rut.
I couldn't find the way between tree gangs;
The black mold spores of bushes grew around.

Where was the compass someone promised me?
There was only hearing, strange disorienting sounds
But with no words, and not my name: and then,
there was your voice.

The moon was bleeding in my mouth, and rain
Was dripping from my eyes; my tongue
A pine cone that had lost its seeds, and the gold wheat
Of my heart had parched and staggered in the wind;

Sand in my two palms, and it ran between
My fingers without cease; an hourglass made of a cicada's
Cast off chiton was my stomach; my two legs
Were black water from a pond; deep in my eyes

The ants had made their bullet holes; the exit wounds
Were zodiac signs tattooed across my back. And yet
The sun, in secret, and without my being conscious,

Was looking down on me, was touching at my wounds,
Not as though to heal them just yet, but with a thought
To showing me the long path to the tree of honeycombs.

Farm girl is what you are, raised in poverty, although
You did not know it; melons, beans and peas,
Guava and sugar cane; pigs roamed your yard,
And in the fall you burned the peanut plants,

Returning to your farmhouse made of brick
From fields quincunxed with smoldering clumped fires,
Your clothes all fragrant from the peanut smoke,
Your hands and forearms stained with dirt and grass.

Your cooking is the simplest, and yet it is the best:
Steamed vegetables with rice, *dofu* from the market,
Shao bing with a fried egg tucked inside, and tea –

A light green tea, grown in the mountains
Or far Chia Yi, picked by women like yourself,
Clear to the very bottom like yourself.

On the east side of the island the sea breaks in,
Explodes in needle spray, thick spurts of foam –
The shore smelling both fresh and rank at once –
Heavy snowflakes, though they never last an instant

In the light that always burns so sharp and strong
And here, of course, there is no snow at all.
Wooden cottages along the road, white sand on floors,
Wooden shutters, rusted screens with holes,

No air-conditioning, the wooden door swings open
With the wind, slams shut; a coil gas range for the pan
And ever present tea kettle; quiet, no children here.

The water stretches out into the infinite Pacific.
But what is there? The many fabled islands
And no more. But this is what we have, our island here.

Your skin is lightest tan, with tones of copper underneath,
Honey is in it too, and the overwhelming light you lived
Beneath and that is part of you, your cinnamon warmth,
And a smoothness not known anywhere, with any other
one,

But only you; silk is not the metaphor; it's deeper,
And more earthly and work-laden, carrying so many tones,
So many textures barely felt. It is a history, the story
Of a climate, of a family, of a fate: one woman,

Yet so many others too, one woman, many women,
All in one; your multiplicity a small sheaf of your beauty
too.

And yet you are the singular, the irreplaceable.

It is not possible to tell your story; there are
No childhood pictures of you: your family was too poor.
And yet, and still, you have your luminous skin.

Music to hear, the music of your mouth,
Your Chinese accent charming everyone,
Smoke rings of spoken syllables
Wobbling through the air, cat's eyes

Of grammar fixing everyone in luminous
Pausings for them actually to hear,
To listen to your foreign voice, like a bird
That beats its wings out of a tree's leaves,

Scattering the rain so those beneath
Are startled, wakened from their coal black
Miner's stoop, their cramping excavations,

Their underground and mired purposes.
But now, instead, rained on with soft bright music drops,
They must unbend like shoots that listen to the sun.

We communicate not just by speech
But also by our standing, walking, being here
Together, sitting quietly. The sun is in the room
Then, illuminating us, and warming us

And filling thoughts between us
With its luminous faint threads, wire threads
Of mercurochrome that shine but can't be held;
Gossamer like softest dust that's waited a long time,

Spider webs that hold the diamonds of the rain,
Reflecting greenest grass, yet neither one of us.
Who is it reflected there? Who or what?

A rain mist soaks the garden's every leaf;
Becomes another, yet with scarcely a touch.
The wet leaf almost touches with its just depending drop.

Apples with a rainy taste and pears with chalky tartness,
Lemons as bright as sunlight in a window,
Grapes with dust still on them and a scent of wood
And saw dust from the packing crates,

Pineapples with their Indian headdress and pinecone
Spikiness, inside tree rings of yellow sticky juice,
Almost hot with sweetness, guava squat and green,
And mangoes with their yellow, orange, and peachy red,

Their huge and egg-shaped pit, and “dragon’s eyes”
In their parchment-colored lizard-skin-like peel:
Inside a gray translucent pulp, sweeter, juicier

Than any grape: fruits of your country,
Fruits you brought to me to taste, giving me
All I wanted, giving me the land, your home.

Y our Chinese hair, thick and absolutely black,
A thousand Arabian ponies could not have
The like of it: luminous and lustrous,
Like the blackest coffee poured out endlessly,

A swaying curtain to your shoulders, light
Gleaming on its surface; it is like a stream
Expressing your deep nature: not your mind
And not your body's life, some pure abundance

That you shed around you as you
Walk into a room or bend to straighten something,
And then come to talk to me; it is a thing

Somewhat apart from you, and yet still you –
Limitlessly graceful, fragrant in yet untellable ways,
And yet there is no end to what it tells.

How strong and firm you are for somebody so small,
Your spine as straight as a young tree, your arms
So slender and yet capable, your hands a farm girl's hands.
In the womb of night you straighten like a seedling,

In the morning when you rise you stretch and yawn
And pray to those gods whom I do not understand
Who give you power, energy, and health.
The sun comes into you, tides of light flow through you.

In the day, the sky's a stair for you to climb,
The earth an endless spring beneath your step,
And the wind brings you your breath, your clarity,

The birds your speaking voice. In the night
The moon shines into you, fills you with its power,
And the stars sow all their seeds inside your heart.

Salt roses of the sea, white chains of the surf dissolve,
Beer froth and loosening lace, vague dispersing windows
Into slate depths; fishermen have drowned
Within short sight of land, their danger every day.

Your father is a farmer. He is seventy.
Still fit and youthful, though one eye is blind.
You are one of eight children. Poverty
Put its official stamp upon your life.

But not upon your spirit, which has grown
Beyond the limits of the bars that tried
To hold you in. You melted them with sunlight.

You broke them with the power of your prayer and study;
You could not be withheld. The proverb says:
Hand against hand, foot against foot: no unstoppable
technique.

The moon spot-lit ocean of midnight, breeze
From the mainland, and some low small waves,
A moon half hidden by cornflower clouds...
The air is warm and smells of sand and salt.

You are a silhouette in the dim blue dark.
You stand there, holding out your hand to me
Yet looking out to the dark East China Sea,
And far into the past, from where your family came.

The sea rocks just visible between green waves
Are ranks of soldiers, ranks of centuries,
Changing even as we look at them.

The mainland, centuries old, yet changing,
Even as we look toward it, unable to see it,
Unable, really, to see anything.

Wheat that has been heaped up in the sun cannot
Convey the gold light of your hair, although your hair is
black,
Blacker than chestnuts burnt in a coal grate;
The fallen apples after rain do not have drops of water

Clearer than your eyes, your eyes of deepest jade,
Although they too are black; your movements
Like the wind in the rong tree when a storm is coming,
Powerful, unpredictable, and more than beautiful.

If anyone thinks that I exaggerate, he has not
Seen your face, your movement, heard your perfect speech,
Had contact with your irreplaceable soul.

He is an outcast excluded from the boundless teeming
Grains of light, a wanderer on a road of charcoal,
His pathway burnt already by the world, his heart by
ignorance.

The thousand-leaved night is full of rain and street signs;
They do not point the way we want to go.
But you already follow the pathway of the maple's root,
Golden petals of the sunflower, the morning glory's light.

You know the intricate enigma of all healing ways;
Evil cannot touch you; sprigs of green mint and the rain
your shield.
If these are not enough you know the ways of prayer
Which in your hands are clear, and wise, and powerful.

The sun has shined down through the deep pond of your
soul,
Disseminating purity and light, instilling wisdom,
Holiness and love; the green vines

Know this in their roots and buds and reach up
Through the sun-shot mirror of the water's depths.
I, on the surface, float above them, trailing both my hands.

Passing the rice fields in the planting time,
The rain smell comes to me; the stooping laborers.
Your father was one such, and he still is,
Even at his age; somehow he still has strength.

Overwhelming sun has toughened all his bones,
His skin and sinews, his heart like an ox's heart.
We who come after must resort to spells.
Special medicines give us the sun instead.

The burning gasoline of light reflected in the water,
With nails of grass green paths set down
Amid the blaze – he walks amid their fire,

He bends down to it, although he is not burned.
Where can we find a similar strength and power?
But you already have it in your heart.

The typhoon came and flooded the subway.
Yet in your shell of peace and moving calm
You were unfazed. You bring the golden
Halo of the Buddha and his golden face

To everything you find, to everyone;
You hand them cups of warm green tea,
But it is more than tea, you give them
Little cakes, and almond cookies, but these

Are tokens of the torrent, massing
Like a river in the flooding spring inside of you,
Your holiness, your light that's held within

And shines in all your gestures, in your eyes,
Illuminated river, flowing luminous source,
Overpowering presence in just one small girl.

At night we bring the streams of both our arms
Into our arms and each bring both our legs into our legs,
The faces of our faces become one
And the breath of our two breathings becomes breath.

The wafer of the light is given us to handle
In the darkness; we pass it to each other
And the small room of creation becomes a single bead,
A water droplet holding all the people of the world –

The newborn baby, the old man near death,
The newly married couple and the bride at birth –
We see them all, feel them as they feel themselves,

The cracking sheathes are opened finally,
And with each other's help we both come forth
To witness and to know, to know and strive.

(for LSC)

You, framed in a doorway – behind you and around
You is the night breeze from the eastern sea;
Above you is the deep subtropical sky,
The moons of green and amber, white silver clouds –

Looking down onto the silent court yard,
Watching from the screenless sliding door
That leads into your bedroom, motionless,
With your fingers on the door's edge, waiting –

But for what? – with your long black onyx hair,
Your red silk and your name that speaks of jade,
With your slim soft legs hidden by the night –

Chinese woman with your lips held just apart
As you breathe the fragrant humid air,
Standing just above me, up to your nipples in darkness.

Mysterious quiet woman, how much you've taught.
I did not know the ways of harmony,
The breath of inner peace stuck in my chest;
I was a knot entangled in itself.

Little by little you undid the cords.
Lying in the sun, I felt the sun,
Lying in the dark I knew the dark:
The million creatures offered to my hand

I touched; they were not harmful, and yet still
I will not live forever. I must burn
In the fire that consumes each living thing,

Already I am partly ash, already
I can see beyond the senses that I have,
Glimpsing the outline of our truer forms.

Everything is given to me when you are around.
The fields full of rice or wheat, purest white
Or amber gold like beer poured from a tap,
Gold particles of sun and chestnut colored shade,

The clouds that float as islands luminous with sun,
The shadows that the earth begins to cast,
The turquoise depths of sky down near the hill
That seem to go so far, so far beyond the earth,

Beyond the thought of everything we know
As beautiful or fearful , good or evil in itself,
Unspoken silent absolution of the sky

At evening: this too is given me. Where could
I find you if I lost you? And yet you'd never go away.
This is the one thing that I truly have.

Gold pollen of the sunset breaking up
In petals of dark empty space, salt grains
Of stars so far away, ours is left on the dry beach
Of absolutely empty night. Where is the earth?

Where are we here, suffering and lost?
I wonder is it worth it. What can befall me
In the time that I have left, and yet
A smile is a type of light. This I have learned.

What mark have I left printed on the world?
Nothing gives my face back to me, even
The glass of mirrors or of windows

Shows me something alien. Three-shadowed man,
Inhabiting the present, the future, and the past,
What can be done to gather you to one?

You are the brown-skinned girl, the maid
Of sunlight and of shadow, musk and grape
Arbors in your hair, and the fruit of melon vines
All gathered in your arms. Champagne

Of the burning hillsides tread on by the sun
Is poured forth from your nipples, and the wheat
Of every field is gathered in your belly's tiny mound.
You who now have all will give me all.

The pond that carries gold light in its blue
And hallowed depths, the trees that give forth fruit
The sun gives them, the wind that never can be anything

But warm, and ships that wait in dry dock,
Readied to transport us to the golden land,
Beyond the Eldorado, the pure blue.

You come from a poor family, from a southern place,
The soil rich and yet the climate harsh, typhoons
Have decimated places near your home;
Mudslides buried hundreds, thousands.

Fishermen have drowned and done so often.
It is a hard life. And the government's corrupt.
These things are not poetic, but they must be said.
Said because they're part of your true life.

You wouldn't be the self you are unless
These things were as they are, and as
They've always been. And yet you have survived.

No, more than just survived. You have become
A hope for others and a help for them.
Always your laughter, luminous and strong.

The night holds always these for you –
Dream, hope and studying the holy book,
(Whatever book you choose, that one is holy);
Your mind itself an illuminated page.

Gather yourself within your quiet harbor,
Circled round with friends, with things you know;
Music is the guardian of the spirit, let it speak,
As you have always done, as you must do.

The solitary self is yet the only self.
We help each other through the wave
Of time, the gradual disclosure

Of the closing hours, the gradual, then stark,
Diminishments; and yet you have yourself,
The knowledge and the wisdom you've acquired.

Blue morning light now edges past the blinds,
Soft sounds from down below, the earliest
Pedestrians, a car starts here, or there;
The snow has muffled the sounds of early day.

Frost is on the window; steam ovals, leaf-like prints.
It's cold in here. We huddle under blankets
For extra warmth. And you're still sound asleep.
Eyes closed, your eyelashes so long and dark.

We will get up; make each other breakfast:
Shao bing for you; steel-cut oats for me.
Chinese tea for both of us. And then to work.

But we'll return at the end of the long day
To share the evening quiet. You'll play your dulcimer.
I'll get some reading done. And then bed early.

Our house has bare walls, a simple kitchen,
Wet clothes are hung outside on a back porch.
We are not rich. But light bestows its million –
No – its infinite smoldering blossoms

Of unaccountable radiance – white, pale yellow,
Gold, and almost solid through the living room:
We walk in splendor amid profusions
Of unlimited and dazzling space;

Spotlights and pencil lines and thick ropes cross
The champagne-colored air. This is the truth.
Reality of light and not of mere commodity.

Now, looking down into the street I see
Cars swarming up against each other;
Each one quite knowing where it needs to go.

Always an excellent cook; everything
Is simple, healthy, pure and fresh. What more
Could anybody ask? Carrots of bright orange,
Onions and green peppers, ginger, mushrooms,

Yam leaves and asparagus, peas, broccoli,
Rice as white as snow, sometimes an egg,
But not too much. Lettuce chopped up fine,
Scallions, pieces of fresh garlic and tomatoes,

And then of course *dofu*. Yes, we're vegetarians,
And so we do not kill. And this is the reason
For chopsticks. It is unseemly to have knives at table.

Is it possible to live in harmony
With each other and the world? Often I,
Alone at night, have wondered about this.

Y ou are the daughter of contested land,
Your father a farmer just outside of town;
Your family in past times was quite poor;
You understand frugality, the strong and plain.

Think of other places, the sea is not far off.
You teach your students English, diligently, well.
You know the nature of both life and death,
And the elements are brought together in you.

Taiwanese woman, your person slender, strong,
You are not made for farm work only;
You have studied long and studied hard.

At night you sleep the sleep of peacefulness;
All disturbing thoughts placed far away.
And sleep renews the virtues that you dream.

You say that you have dreams, your second sight,
And ghosts had haunted your old apartment:
No need to be afraid of them you say,
If you leave them alone they won't bother you –

And sometimes they don't want their faces seen,
They hide them in their hands and slink away;
When a typhoon's coming, with its wind and rain,
And screaming noises that catch the building's eaves,

You say that it's the spirits gathering outside,
Conferring together which place to go to next.
You're absolutely serious about this.

Woman of second sight, deep religious mystic,
Who knows what it could be you see and know?
Who knows what it could be you really are.

Steep darkness coming early in these latitudes,
No gradual declination of the sun:
Space is lilac, then empurpled; suddenly,
And without warning, it is night.

Night with no stars, loud street signs blare them out;
Traffic nudging bumpers, intersections tangled,
Constant traffic horns, streetlights half the time
Ignored: this is Taipei. A drizzle over all.

Out of this confusion you have come,
Braving lethal traffic on your motorbike;
The room is half dark, a lemon slice of light

Illuminating the hallway near the door.
We float out into the night, all limits gone,
Stepping through a doorway into elsewhere.

Your eyes in the dark room pools of second sight,
Your hair an aura of black premonitions.
Second sight is speechless, and yet you have
Your toughness and a calmness deep inside.

Black leaf veins now birth mark your face.
A wind takes them away, but we're indoors.
No wind here and no trees; ghost shadows,
Wind from out of nowhere. You stand facing me,

Staring into my eyes. Your eyes are like
Two chestnuts, brown, opaque, not human,
Human still; and yet not threatening.

You do not speak to me but look away.
Your face returns to normal; then you sit down on the floor,
A ways away, your knees drawn up around you.

I took taken too many sleeping pills – zolpidem.
Hallucinations in the middle of the night.
I saw ghosts, witches with tendril arms,
Extending them, wavering like pipe smoke,

Enticing me to come, smiling blood grins
Of pure evil, their arms like water weeds
Attempting to entangle me, blood-thirsty;
A then a woman's face – beautiful – emerged

From the dark host, bloodstained teeth,
A grinning mask from hell, beyond horrifying.
I knelt up in the bed, my arms extended to them,

Beckoning, or warding off, I don't know which.
And you sat on the floor, your knees drawn up,
Not looking at me. Seeing everything.

But then: morning, sunny, full of gold-green leaves
And pears, cherries, apples with water beads
And stiff leaves on them, pineapples sliced in sunny rings,
Fried rice with green peas, diced carrots, a boiled egg,

Tea the color of pale honey mixed with lemon,
Poured out so steaming hot in small white cups,
Mere thimblefuls of tea, sipped carefully,
Dispelling the night and its insanity.

I go out to the balcony, seven stories up;
The day has started once again. Women
With umbrellas protecting their fair skin from sun,

Men jerking delivery trucks around – air conditioners,
Bottled water, vegetables from small farms.
I glance down. A spot of sun is in my tea.

You've come from the open market, early
In the morning, your arms full of bags of vegetables –
Sweet potatoes, white potatoes, onions, garlic,
And yam leaves, carrots, and fresh *dofu* –

The farmer makes it himself – it has a nutty taste,
A honeydew, a cantaloupe, some guava,
(Called *bala*) and then some peanut candy
(An acquaintance makes it in his tiny shop).

Always giving friends business, that's the way,
Favors and returning favors, and not
Mere money, that's what makes things go.

Your arms are full of plastic bags (they're always pink).
And then I help you to unload it all,
And we talk about what happened at the market.

White mist-rain and silence came into the land.
You came to me out of the drizzly wet, a green umbrella
Parasoling you; your Chinese face was framed
In faintest shadows; eyes of black coffee, cheekbones

So high and sharp. Your face entirely beautiful,
And more than beautiful. The Good shines in it.
You are of the Blessed, one of the holy people
God has placed upon the earth. Your sweet grace
everywhere,
Your sweet and constant grace, making things easier
For everyone, thinking of others first, always yourself last.
What would the world be like without your kind?

If you *are* a kind, that is. But really I don't know if you
could be:
Apparition from the rain or sun, no weathers dampen you:
Your spirits and your spirit are a constant good.

Aquatint of dim air in the early afternoon:
The fountain pouring upward bits of ice
And grainy light that sparkles as it fills
The marble basin where huge goldfish loiter.

A prostitute bar across the street has black notes
Prancing from the Chinese sign I cannot read;
Under the fountain are piano keys,
Unheard-of melodies that bring more rain

And even worse wind too: Taipei; grimy city,
Pink and green, and powder blue, with all its lights
All advertising bars, and girls, massage parlors.

Lights are all reflected in the fountains; the girls
Held captive by their mainland China bosses.
Pale harbingers of the typhoon in the distance.

In the winter the bridge had disappeared in mist;
Spearmint green rails out of frosty cloud.
Up ahead pedestrians emerge from films of smoke.
Traffic below unfazed and blaring straight.

Green bridge to where? Where are they all going?
Foreign city, I cannot find my way in you.
The natives are not friendly, racism curdles them,
Or maybe the narrow alleyway of poverty

Lasting for too long. But you, even though
You were the poorest of the poor, you still
Retain your loving kindness, affection

Like honey pouring out, and pouring endlessly,
Like water in the fountains, like the smile
Of the Buddha, like the golden radiance of his face.

You have converted to Christianity you say,
But yet you do not merely talk, you live it,
Just as you lived your Buddhism before.
Religion is not part of you, it is you.

One night I was drinking wine, getting drunk,
The bottle of bright liquid more than half way down.
I said you were the most religious person
I had ever known. You said thank you.

What is religion? The opening of self,
So that the self's no longer where it was,
The center of the universe, the single, crucial thing;

It is a vista all of light, opening of all horizons
Absolutely, all at once; an apparition of the others
Out of invisibility, where they once had been.

Peach colored moons in a subtropical sky
Against an aquamarine background; seed stars
Of pink and of white-turquoise set around
Shining cloud bars of misty indigo.

The wind is picking up and blowing sand
Across the parking lot; we're walking back –
Heads down against the grit. And yet you smile.
You're always smiling, because you love the world.

Beauty or ugliness: the sunlit market
In the morning, thousands of people
Shouting, haggling, selling; or those strange two –

Insulting you one day on the street,
I about to deck them, but you held me back.
Even to such as them you give your charity.

Overwhelming radiating sun of blinding
Lemon rind, and pomegranate light
Through cherry trees; sunlight hot as lemon pulp
Making you sweat hot tea; dizzying sun

Of purple blackout cold sweat haze, when all
Turns weightless pinprickling wooziness,
And you have to drop to one knee, or else
Hold on with one hand to the nearest wall.

But just then, by telepathy, you call me
On my cell phone: How am I? you ask.
Maybe not so great. What's wrong? The heat, I say.

Go in underneath some shade, you tell me.
I'll be there in a bit. And then you are.
Bringing me cold water and some very cold green tea.

So many Chinese women, all of them so nice
And all of them so beautiful as well;
How could one ever choose? Where there is so much
beauty,
Beauty becomes the norm. One thinks of other things.

I see you sitting on your little bed,
A nun's cot really, studying a Sutra
Or the Bible. I think of your great thoughtfulness,
So much beyond what other people have.

Your head bowed down in concentration,
Avid to take in what's there. Just as,
Out in the world, your smile, your childlike laughter,

Show your spirit open and still welcoming
New things, new things of every kind, new people too,
And these the most, new souls of every kind.

Your laughter is so childlike; it's more than just a charm;
It gives an indication of your soul –
So bright, expansive, ever-present, always living,
Never half-asleep, always welcoming the others,

No matter who, no matter where they come from;
And I myself was one such. In the small bodega
Where by chance we met, and I, with no Chinese,
Was having trouble ordering, you stepped right in,

Not obtrusively, confident, yet underlyingly shy,
Telling the *laubahn* what I was trying to say,
Then talking to me, shyly, and yet thinking to yourself,

Behind the candid and yet careful mask you wore.
You became my Chinese teacher then. O how
Many intricate relationships: Chinese woman, foreign man.

Not merely laughter, but you sing as well.
How well I remember your singing in the kitchen
As you cooked for me. The honey-colored sun
Shone through the kitchen window making

Haloed all around you, just the finest outlines,
That set you slightly off from all that you were doing –
Chopping, frying, boiling, chopping more...
Chinese food is sometimes lots of work.

And yet your singing never stopped. It wasn't loud,
But to yourself, and I, I couldn't recognize the song,
Something Chinese, no doubt. I knew that you were happy
then,

Your voice not loud but clear, and pleasant;
Its tones were sweet, melodious and beautiful.
Voice is an emanation of the soul, the unmistakable.

Luminous spirit, peaceful lambent mind,
Your eyes look to the darkness up ahead,
Opening cones of light, as when a burning glass
Is focused on some paper, and the sun burns through.

And you step through the dark; the door
That's closed on us, the known and unknown
Boundary; your calmness and your courage
Giving effortless entrance, bright aura of your fire.

And yet you will be changed. There is no way
To pass the narrow gates without that happening,
No way to pass from boundary to flame.

And yet we've seen the like of this before
When putting paper in a grate, how it wrinkles, blackens,
Burns – and then is all configured into stars.

When I am sick I burrow in myself: nocturnal dreams
Awaken me although it's day; fever makes everything
Blurred and confused, as though through dirty glass,
The world is an unwashed aquarium tank;

My head is twice its size or else a dim construction
Packed in gauze; my body papier-mâché,
Doubled with ghost aches in every joint, or else
My head pounds with the impact of an anvil;

I can just stand: the world seems excrement
And everything is hostile: colors blare.
But you bring me flowers, and space opens up –

An opening, a relaxation diffuses in me,
My mind begins to trace accustomed paths;
I look at you again, and the world comes back to me.

Light of all light, arresting glory of midday,
Blinding and more than blinding, stunning
Aura beyond all visibility, burning non-substance
And yet somehow real, conflagration

Of the real beyond substance: darkened
With radiance that we cannot see, and yet do see,
Life-creating power and life-killing,
Wave and particle and particle and wave,

Engendering and yet defeating mind,
Source of all insight and confusion too,
Spur of vitality that awakens us,

Suffocating, stultifying incubus,
Luminous opacity, and obscure portent,
Mundane word, beyond all worldly speech.

They're liars, those who told you I had gone.
The public wasteland that is gossip swallowed them.
It's said whoever goes there won't come back,
Or, if they do, then they'll be sorely changed.

And such were these unfortunates: tangled
In the cobwebs of their own repellent speech;
They were like flies caught there. A spider
Was not needed. They died by eating their own shit.

We will go far from the place of lies and dreck,
Let the dog's vomit be licked up by itself.
Let it enjoy it; it is to its taste.

But in the glowing fire of the place we've come to,
We bring each other comfort, rest and peace.
With bring each other truth and fidelity.

Fragrances of the south, you grew up among them,
Oranges, lemons, the trees on your father's farm,
Fig trees, the special scent of *rongs* that bear no fruit
Except their own gray basket weave aerial roots,

An earthen smell, slightly metallic, somewhat bitter.
The smell of mud and then, of course, the smell of rain,
Of rain and rain -- typhoons with all their
devastating winds.

And then the scent of strawberries, tart and delicate,

The hot fields of summer. In autumn, cane smoke
From burning piles, sugar cane and peanuts,
And the smoke of piled leaves, wood smoke

From your fireplace as well, and in the winter,
The fragrance of the small stoves that you warmed
Your rooms with, crackling with firewood and sticks.

You who are the helper of so many people's hearts,
Who can help your own, deep in the delirium
Where dark confusing woods cluster around,
Filled with multiplying trees that stagger into distance,

Making any place another, another place this one,
Where confusing sounds call out your name,
With your own voice, or with your father's voice,
And snow paths glimmer faintly in the mud,

Where swirling directions turn you round and round,
Disorienting you, pointing the wrong path,
Although you cannot know that it is wrong –

Gather the light that clusters in the snow,
Snow crystals, forms of beauty and austerity,
Constructions of delicacy, integrity, renewal.

You the sun and I the sunflower, following you,
Drinking in your nurturing and steady light,
Your light like honey pouring endless from a jar,
I raise my petals toward the apex of your source,

Inexhaustible profusion that you are,
The sun burnt sand you gathered to my roots
Was not enough. My leaves stretch out their fullest
Aspiration toward your infinite expanse.

Yet how to reach you; counting all your steps
Is not enough; I need the touch of light, and more,
The radiance past all light, source beyond source.

Only this can fill the infinite cells, gold arteries
Of eye-filled leaves; only these can give
The elemental power to reach on and on.

Love in the night, when the lilies of honeysuckle
Tangle in the dark and night birds wreath themselves
In bowers of peacock eyes, watching deep water
In the field stone well, where mica seeds of stars bloom

In ailanthus trees, the trees of heaven, of hell,
Whichever is preferred by the traveler through
The subterranean streams, his overcoats of mania,
The green cool leaves of rest; and in the amniotic

Globe of tea green water the hashish of redemption
Exhales tree root fragrances, imperturbable
Grasslands of wide and white gold steppes, where

Horses walk in scattered herds, where nomads
Follow them, where the moon is like a cone of blood
That is not spilled but, nonetheless, replenishes the sun.

Twilight fades around the green eyes of the owl
In its feathered hive, the mandibles of insect pines
Are whispering, It's time to hunt, or else, time to refrain;
The sulfur moon is pulling duckweed veils to itself,

And as it does, it slowly grows blue spider veins
Of ruptured capillaries; deep snow is full
Of fallen sunspots and the finest lunar dust
Is sifted through its mesh. Shadow-men are hunting.

They'll search and yet not find. The compass that they use
Is filled with auricular bones of hares, celadon eyes
Of armored fish, whose names and lineage

Are still unknown. So they will wander through the
warmest snow
And then find shelter in the owl's centuries tall tree,
There fall into a dual-bodied, and yet endless sleep.

The women wandering in the sugared wood
Are fashion models, though they're no longer that:
One has the eyes of a green bobcat, one
The neck and head of an Ibis, and one's a scorpion.

The sugar is not snow and yet it is not salt;
It may be sulfur, but in the moon's aqua light,
It has the dim appearance of long-dried blood,
Pigeon blood perhaps. They try to wash their eyes with it,

Yet to no avail. Thus, none of them can see.
They make their way by feeling for the trees.
The tree bark is like nothing other than their

Mothers' private parts. It's disconcerting.
Still by dint of touch and, as it were, a sort of memory,
They do find their way into the hydra's cave.

Waving tall and yellow grass and each one has an eye,
Not for watching the sun, however; these eyes
Are always closed; a milkweed-pod-like covering,
Like lizard skin, keeps them from the sun.

Blood-colored insects swarm in the tall grass.
A twisted girl – that is to say, a girl with a twisted spine –
Was found here one night, hideously used.
Insects had eaten the face away, dental records sufficed.

One “Zeek,” he earned his living as a carpenter,
Spoke often with the sun. The bright insects
That floated in the air – not the crawling ones –

He knew were kisses of the sun and special messengers.
He had no choice but to obey, it was the sun.
He had no choice. No one can possibly, when the
sovereign orders you.

The agate eye of the jaguar watched me as I slept.
The python tangled the tree limb it was on
And got a better view. The sounds of the forest
Were like newsprint burning, and incessant.

Hearing without ears to hear was All,
And clouds flowed out along the ground
Like mist, and yet they were the clouds.
Sparrows, crows, and wrens were bullets

Shooting through vapor, and the ground
Was full of handprints made of blood.
The mud itself was active, animate,

With hand-like structures, tight fingers
That wrapped themselves around you
If you stood in one place for too long.

The burning leaves are tongues of flame with arteries
all through.

We speak strange languages, yet we cannot speak;
A fire is in our throats, it rises to our mouths
And wants to be let out, it wants its venture in the world.

But in our minds, and in our mouths, and in our two cupped
hands,
Anointed foreheads bear stigmata of the weeping wound
Of non-communication: nothing can reach the other side.
A hand held out is just a held out hand.

Puzzle of languages, and we speak such different ones.
Miscommunication is our element; we speak, and think,
And then we speak again, but it is all dry leaves,

Dry leaves beneath our feet, beneath our wandering
And pathless steps. Where can we go from here?
Children wandering the green but pathless wood.

You who have touched me, you who have embraced
The center of my being, like blown milkweed pod
In slanting summer light, the silk is not just one,
It is so many strands that make the tireless source.

You separated them with all due care, helpful, kind,
Letting each shine against the deep rich sun
That even now is coming on so fast,
Fiber by fiber, each one taken up,

Held for a second, observed, then gently blown
To dust-mote light, taking its voyage on the air.
And you were all smiles, smiles and laughter;

For nothing can perturb you, not the falling sun
Nor the dryness of the late September field,
Since nothing can remove one's true desire.

The morning glory of your face with its bright star
That speaks though all your smiles, your smiles
When you are happy, when you're laughing –
These so bright and broad – and even

When things don't go the way you want:
Luminous transcendence gathered from way down
Far in the flower's secrets, its indigo and mystery:
Your far and deep recesses where no one can reach.

And this is called your holiness, I guess;
This the inviolable and disappearing place
To every glance. Perhaps it can be sensed, though,

As a flower is sensed, just visibly at first,
And then, and tentative, more close and intimate:
The beauty of the morning glory and its star of day.

Buddhist religion is a blossoming flower.
There is no black inside their temples,
Only bright yellow, like tall sunflowers,
Or sometimes with an ochre tint,

Crimson and vermillion wands of incense
Placed in huge cauldrons made of polished brass –
Deep pink and red, and nowhere any shadows;
Only incense smoke and chanted prayers.

No one looks unhappy. There are offerings
Laid out, usually sweet things – pineapple cakes,
Cookies, mangoes, pears, pomellos, grapes;

The Buddha likes sweet things. The day is bright
Outside the temple and the sky is blue,
The last clouds of the last typhoon blowing by.

Winter trees coated with arthritic ice
Catch the sun in branches as it pinpoints through
The kitchen window, past green curtains,
Pie-wedging the toaster. Soon you will be up.

You rise up early like the red-orange sun
And say your prayers, but never tell me what;
Even the sun has secrets, as it illuminates
The gray bare trees; sluices of light are shining even now.

Then you make breakfast. Not much for yourself,
But you always try to make me eat some more.
The sun half-way above the medical arts building —

And the trouble of the world will never cease.
We do our best to love, take care of things.
But even when we're gone, it will not cease.

Golden ciborium that the Priest holds up
Contains the body and the blood of Christ;
The lion of St. Jerome stalked through the archways
Of the monasteries, guarding manuscripts.

St. Anthony saw monsters in the desert night –
Griffins, fish heads, jackals, things without name.
Opening their voices and their jaws,
They may have swallowed or converted him;

We cannot know. One thing is clear,
Evil has taken over the whole world.
Markets and markets, everything is markets,

Sub-human scum sell excrement to each other.
And yet one thing is certain: we can still get through
And the people in themselves rise up again.

You and I'll walk through the bamboo grove
Listening to it clicking on itself in the coming
Typhoon wind; the slender trees will waver
And tap and seem to meet out time, although

Not steadily, slight scraping taps, warnings of storm,
And the tossing shadows lead into a dense
Invisible darkness: we never venture in,
Although there are some paths that lead you there.

Forests of bamboo; what am I doing here?
I often wonder this: but then there's you.
You give me a circle of light in which to stand,

A clearing in the foreign place, that's not just trees
But people, friendly strange ones, all wishing me well.
And with such guidance, bright paths can be found.

In my dream the jaguar's face was painted black,
And poison ivy came from his low torso: he was all
leaves,
Rain beads clustered in his lynx white fur,
Which he still had. His jaws were like a pit dug in
the ground.

His legs were like five serpents, counting his tail.
He was silent except for low orgasmic murmurs
That shook the ground just slightly where he stood.
He vibrated internally with startling incessant power.

(Suddenly there was a rifle in my dream.)
His eyes were green as arsenic, but glowing.
They took in every corner of the night.

Yet I was the exception: I was invisible to him.
Three times he flowed past me in the brush
And each time he ignored me. I was irrelevant. I
shot him anyway.

Candles around us, white for purity,
For virtue, candles around the bed,
Their seed-like flame steady and hovering
Above the wick to show they're

Somewhat disembodied, not entirely
Perhaps, but in the fire's elevation,
Like a drunken man's, it rises
Somewhat, just above the earth,

In favor of a luminous excellence,
Leaving the evil of the world behind
In favor of exultation – of resurrection –

From the realms of shit – of stark commodity,
Resurrection from the darkness into light,
Into the realm freedom, light, spirit.

The wind blows through the trees, but wind
Is nothing to the spirit grown inside of us;
The lilac bushes spread their bright pink, and the air
is warm
Across your face. The birch trees have their bark,

Yet nothing to the graceful sway of willows
Out along the river, where the beavers work.
Fishing time will soon be here – all those bullheads
Lurking, growing their curled barbed whisker spines.

Lovely Taiwanese woman, you showed me
Your beautiful, colorful, entrancing land;
Now it is my turn: deer in the deep woods,

The countless streams and lakes, the trees so high
You can't even see up to the top, the great St. Lawrence
With its countless islands, Niagara and its falls.

Southern woman, your gentleness is like the warmest
breeze
That comes, sometimes, from the South China Sea;
Your voice is soft, conciliatory in trouble, always kind;
It is a small light in the dim room of one's life.

The Chinese say the soft is greater than the hard,
Your comments are diplomatic and endearing;
Don't worry, you always say, *Bu yau dan shing*;
And lay your hand on my arm to calm me down,

There are many lights in our sometimes darkened life,
Light and warmth we cannot always describe,
Or even clearly know, and yet – these are the graces.

Your face, incomparably beautiful,
Is one of them for me – grace upon grace.
A smile is a type of light, and kindness as well.

A melon has a flower and a flowering vine,
Two melons have two flowers, naturally,
And two long vines that wind around the soil
Drinking the sun with their two prickly skins.

The power of the sun that comes in waves
Soaks into them, like women tanning on a beach;
Layer on layer of warmth and light – who knows
What secrets and what hidden power they store?

Hot burgeoning of night; when all the sun's warmth
Is finally given back, wave after wave, and all the vines' low heat
Is given back as well, with its damp earthy scent.

How is our small life meaningful? And how
Is our larger and so mysterious life likewise?
Through small secrets and gradual pathways.

A book of many pages containing dreams,
Pages of light and shadow, jade and stone;
The waves themselves are books, infinite
And turned by currents, opened in the green

Depths of the water; there spinning light motes
Read them and bug-eyed fish will swallow some;
Hurricanes will toss them here and there
And trenches sink them past all mortal count.

What is the use of books, if these things happen?
It could be none. Or else it could be
They populate the world that's not the world,

Occupying corners of a disused place,
Sea-sunk, or windblown through their pages,
A cast-off human thing, of interest or concern to whom?

(for CT)

You were mine and I was also yours. We slept
Together, lying side by side, sharing a dream perhaps
In which we flew above the surface of the earth,
The devastated and forgotten earth.

Yet in our dream nothing like this was there:
We saw the blue-green crescent of all days, intact,
The jade green rivers, luminous with sun,
Mud flecks of deltas and the square corn fields,

Miles and miles of wheat, and then the open,
Almost uninhabited, the endless plains,
And we imagined wild horses down there running

In chaotic herds, grazing at will, fighting, mating,
The seemingly eternal sun shining down
On all of it – the hills, the fields, the rivers.

The night door closes on us, and we enter several dreams.
In one there is a corridor, and then another one; we cannot
find

Our way out of the house that now, we see, is burning,
And then a trap door in the attic, a stair drops down for us,

We climb it and we find our parents there, as they were
children:
Surprisingly they know us from some pictures on the
mantel piece,
Pictures when we too were children: dust the universal
element.

A window is letting in a pale urine light, it is the future,

But we do not look. A sheet the color of fly paper can be
Scrolled down, a yellow string the color of earwax,
A golden wedding band tied to its end. We pull it down.

There's small emotion in doing this. And then we look
around.
Our parents, both sets of them, have disappeared. They're
merely clothes and dust,
Except for all four faces, which wear minimal grim smiles.

The waving wheat beneath the spirit of the wind,
Gold frothing with spike shadows in between.
The sun is low, a flattened disc that floods gold fields
To orange pink in the distance; shadows,

Like the fingers of a hand: blades of the sun
Cut down the wheat, and spears break through it,
Testing here and there. Is there a harvester
Still working down the rows? I see a green dot,

But the sun is in the way. What is it –
Living in this place, the surface of the earth?
Work, it would seem, and more than work.

But there is also love: and we work at it,
Helping each other, not with scything wheat,
But with a thousand harvests every day.

The silver fog flows in from the South China Sea.
It stretches along the shore for ten kilometers,
Cars run their headlights, yellow pearls in fog,
The trees clouded with wet mist, beads of rain.

Right now, somewhere, a piano's playing.
Someday they'll get it right; but the weather
Dampens everything; the shops seem closed already,
Though it's only four o'clock. This life is almost gone.

What is underneath the ground; I hope a better pianist.
Through small passageways we meet our other life
And find the times, the places where it all might have gone
right.

Beehives of possibility are there, but stored, like honey,
In the past, a gold and perfect crystalline success,
Bearing some other name and other dates.

Although I am not famous you love me anyway.
And even though I've not accomplished many things,
You count them all as many, as tremendous feats.
It's easy to say you're biased, but you are.

But then one day the river will reverse,
Fire will turn cold, snow will be warm as sun,
Will lure the sun down to the earth itself,
And the hills and valleys will exchange places.

Gold too will be worthless, everything
Will be given to whoever needs it;
It will be the fiery utopia so long dreamed of.

But even though all this will happen, and it surely will,
I still must strive, I still must strive all by myself,
Must work, achieve the thing I want, and will.

The Southern Cross is made of mica specks
And silver dust and pomegranate seeds
Set in the dewed infinity of the southern sky
Whose Marianas depths go on and on,

Cornflower specks and spiked blue-green,
Configured in a shape that some say
Must contain all things -- whether of portents
Or viaticum, the bright and dim mechanics

Of all hope and fear: but you, my love of loves,
You know quite well which side you choose,
Your prayers are supplications fabled through the night,

And mine are merely guesses, hopes, and fears,
Yet the burning figure shining down on me
May guide me still, somehow, on night pathways.

March returns with its intense flat light,
Its brutalizing winds, its bow-dipping waves,
The gray of the water is not, and never is, more cold,
And the beaches are deserted but for twisted wood.

The beginning of the rains also, and sailors
With forsythia yellow northwesterners, pulled down hats...
“Fisherman’s friends” are in every mouth; all throats
Are scratchy like an old-time record player.

For out into the dim South China Sea
You watch the waves come in; waves, people, wars,
And economic war. You wonder what will happen to
Taipei.

I wonder too. Taipei of luminous adds on building sides,
Of absolutely the best metro anywhere, Taipei
Of small stands selling food so cheap. Taipei of the tallest
building in the world.

In my dream the blue-black rain was flooding the
Apartment
And the lizards crawled along the upper wall, three
roaches
With the faces of small birds were flying in and out
Through the cigarette marked screen, and the screen
was orange
With rust or menstrual blood, though that's a darker
shade,
The wooden table in the middle of the room began
to spin,
But no one was kneeling at it (there were no chairs)
And the elderberry grapes along the wallpaper fell
in clusters
Into my guest's mouth. She was the first one that
this happened to,
And so in honor of this event I made her tea with
morphine.
She said she wanted more, but that was it (not
really, I was saving it).
As the hashish smoke, the color of a burnt out light
bulb, filled the air,
We discovered inside each elderberry, there were
seven worlds:
A luminous jelly one, a faint dim one, and then the
Gnostic star steps and their
fiery gates.

Elderberry in the later spring, purple blossoms,
almost black,
The weather's warmer now, the breeze is mild
And elderberry wine is good to drink. Things that are close
Are almost inside us; things that are far are eaten by
the sun.
The sun blooms outward through the sky, each night
The opening enigma of sunset, and then closed down;
Space has a listening, just as visibility to sight.
The world is open to the ear and to the eye.

Now its sounds are changed, more clear and far –
Premonition opens like a seed, each moment:
What will come after it? And of what kind?

A summer storm? A flood? A hurricane?
The loss of all your money in the bank?
Or just the swaying of the elderberry bush?

Gladiolas, hollyhocks, these old-fashioned flowers –
And yet no flower is ever old-fashioned,
Planted close together, as my mother did
With lilies of the valley for the Virgin;

Bright early spring, spring near Easter time,
The air still cool and damp, I wore my old
Apple green polyester jacket when I went out
Riding on my bike. Speed burned my face,

And the wind tousled even my short hair.
When it got dark the houses were all black,
Cubes raying out sliced up television light.

No one was out; the street was dark and still.
I parked my bike, and went indoors, watched
TV for a while, felt tired, and went to bed.

The trees have gathered snow around themselves
And blue stalagmite waves, climbing the white beach,
Inch their way up to cigarette smoke and ash
Between white mats of crotches and brown aerial wands.

Loud wings of black crepe paper crowd around
And settle, loosing excrement on reaching arm
And torso and on ground snow itself -- jeweled
Settings of bright shiny calcium with a blackened crust.

The crows' profuse boluses of ash and ink –
Their call is always many calls, is choruses
Of something not quite living, desperate, not yet dead.

Dishes set down in thousands before the king of earth.
Who is the king of earth and what is he?
Computers calculate all this. Newspapers clean it up.

When you pray you place your spirit in the holy blue.
The earth comes up to meet you, bringing you its strength.
The soil beneath the earth supports the earth,
And the fire deep inside the earth grows rooted in your
heart.

Breeze comes from the south, the north, the east, the west.
All the air supports you, it is absolutely pure,
Waters from downhill, overflowing all their banks,
And yet there is no flood. There is the spirit of bright
holiness.

This is for you, and this is all for you.
The evil ones, the ones who can't find this,
Those who devote themselves to excrement and money.

People like the landlord and the slick car dealer.
These must rot in hell. For hell is not beneath the earth.
Hell is right here among us. Hell is of the mind.

Full ripeness of apples, pears, peaches, bananas,
Sugar cane and light green Chinese tea, all
Pure water from the springs of earth, the soil
That brings forth the fire deep inside

And makes things what they are, burgeoning
In fire, water, earth, invisible and active air
Much like the holy spirit, or perhaps it is;
Unbelievers begone, you are not worthy

To receive the fruits of earth, you are not
Worthy to receive your vision or your hearing,
Your taste or touch, nor worthy to receive these others here,

And certainly you are not worthy to receive
The light's embodiment, this one pure girl.
You are but human excrement, poisoning the world.

Dark pelt-like night, deep lake of blackness
Where the filings of the stars float in their still
And oil-like luminous reflections, drifting
Past the limits of the earth, and clouds

Are blue and green in the water's light wake,
Tattering the sky to corridors of yet
Invisible light, with fragrant darkness
Rising from the stillness of the absent waves,

Pebbles in shined water shine and make a path
Of oil in the moon's complete eclipse.
Glimmering like diamonds of the serpents' backs,

Reaching a magic pathway for your step:
The serpents are benign, and all enchanted still,
And if they dare to hurt, they will be killed.

In the morning when you rise the sun is yours.
It floods in like a river all around you,
Showers you with yellow and gold rose petals
And your eyes are open wide to see it all.

Your skin is warmed by it, your hair lustrous
And warm, and all the good of day is gathered
Ready to be placed into your arms;
You are the spirit of this time and place,

But really a subtle fire burns in you:
The light and glory of your holiness –
You are the angel set down in the darkness,

On the earth, a mortal angel, still,
But with the light, and more than light, the radiance,
The beauty of the air and of all luminous space.

This poem is my last one for you now.
I hope you like them, and I hope they're true:
Near is the god, they say, and difficult to grasp.
But what about an angel? Beauty, light,

Shine forth; perhaps I am not ready yet.
This poem is my last one for you now.
You know we've known each other for so long;
Over and over I have been amazed.

For you are holiness given to the catastrophic earth.
You are the Light that shines in darkness.
A small light to be sure, but indispensable.

It is a privilege to have known you here.
It was a privilege to have met you – How?
This poem is my last one for you now.

THE ISLAND

“...for the soul is something divinatory.” Plato

“...the soul is, in a certain sense, filled with things.”
Aristotle

Doors in the air open and we fly through at 40,000 feet:
the day and the night and the day once again.
There's a dim blue around cabin windows, and when the
slats are pushed up they become sudden portholes
of light.
It is day, with doorways of light opening in the clouds all
around, and we fly through at 40,000 feet.

The green ocean lies beneath, a solid field of bright jade
with a few ships the size of pin heads, each with a
short white thread behind it.
And we descend, in enormous stair steps, stepping down
into another world.

Here street signs mean nothing and the language is a
melody of tones I can barely discern and not
understand at all, in this crowded city of Chinese
faces.

Tropical heat, the air smelling of peaches, and then the
fragrant needles of rain.
See the dragon dancing on its many human feet amid
firecracker smoke in the alleyway.
There are offerings of food placed in front of each shop.
There are trashcans full of fire and silver pails of smoking
incense.

And later you see the dragon again, this time writhing in
flight above gold tiles on the temple's roof.

Sun-dazed darkness: and a parchment colored light, as
though from a fanned sail; and the quiet of the
temple.

Vermillion incense in long wands like cattails; these
planted in wrought iron cauldrons filled with white
ash. The smoke is sweet and thick in the shadows.

In the deep interior, gold statues listen, gold faces are
multiplied in dim chambers, in amber recesses. Red
and silver boxes gleam, and the walls are lined with
miniature doors, scripted in gold.

It is the temple dedicated to the one who stands guard at the
gates of the spirit world.

July is the Ghost Month, when the doors of the other world
are left slightly ajar and the spirits are able to come
through like a kind of draft.

Grandmother, why do you stare? As I practice Tai Chi in
the courtyard. Grandfather, veteran of Chiang's
great army, why are you surprised to meet me on
the road? Father and mother, why don't you
recognize your son?

To be borne beneath bamboo leaves. Here there are so
many stray dogs and also the roosters each morning.
The five Shaolin animals: dragon, tiger, leopard,
snake, and crane.

And a man placed special herbs in my hand. Stranger, who
arrived one day. That was I.

What are the seasons of the year and what are the seasons
of the earth? Is it the morning or the evening when I
rise, and what is the surface that I walk out upon?
Sunrise buried within me, where can I find you by
looking?

Where will truth come upon me, dropping through the
cracks of shadows that the tree sets around me
like a wicker basket?

Rice fields of arsenic green wind-scripted with invisible
characters; smoke from brick chimneys drifting
above the green, and the flash of water ditches like
strands of aluminum.

From my balcony at the edge of the industrial park I look
down fifteen stories on the rice fields at the city's
outskirts.

A gull alights in the green anemone; the field is a green
sponge squeezed by so many hands.

The sea is nowhere to be seen, and yet its power is
everywhere: the East China Sea, the Taiwan Straits,
are nowhere to be seen, yet even the names are
everywhere and their powers are everywhere.

The sea is nowhere to be seen in the landlocked city, and
yet it is everywhere in the air, in the light, in the
flowers on porches, in the wicker trees in the
temple's courtyard, in the light green and white of
the sugar cane chopped in short lengths, in the
orange juice thick and pulpy and sold from small
blue trucks, in the unwrapped bamboo leaves of
tsong tz with drops of steam still in them.

Money, how you governed my nocturnal flight and even
the darkened paths of sleep. The coins that were set
upon my eyes I threw off. And yet still they were
coins.

The sea's massing silver, the waves of dark currency
rippling, the cavernous vaults opening with
enormous slowness in the depths. The sea is not
only of water.

And yet the pure idea of morning, does it still exist? Having
come so far to the east, I can't have missed it. Here
perhaps the scale is once again true.

And here the food stalls smoke with clear oil and a thin
blue flame, here speech is a voluble clamor and the
street a tangle of cars, trucks, and vending carts.
And yet I am here as well – stranger, who arrived
one day.

Here I thread my way among narrow alleys, like a stray dog
among conic sections of light and steep doorways of
shade. How I love you, Taipei!

Above me gray laundry is stretched between plaster
buildings with tea-colored water stains marking
their sides; silver-grated windows shine and
white bedding blows in the air.

In the aqueous light of the alleyway my eye is led upward,
it's as though I were a fish watching the bright
surface of a canal.

Fierce tropical light sparks on white roofs, on the white
walls of sheds, on white geraniums like tatters of
crepe paper burnt up in the sun.

How I love you, Taipei, noisy and light-drenched, crowded
city of Chinese faces, your cloud-filled mountains,
your green and luminous hills, your shallow river
hazy with light in its silver far off, boats drawing
creases through it – here, in your crisscross of
streets, your bright and crowded markets every
morning, amid your dazzling carnivals by night,
your palm-shaded boulevards, your ornate and
stunning temples, your broad public squares, and
then your quiet courtyards.

And now: the Shuang-Lien market in the morning, where
there are piles of fruits and vegetables, bunches of
carrots, piles of green and red peppers, bundles of

white onions, green parsley and spinach, green
beans and red beans, bright twists of chili peppers,
bushels of peas, covered trays of creamy *dofu* as
heavy as custard, tilted screens of light green guava,
piles of melons yellow and hay green, troughs of
red peaches, green and orange squash, boxes of red
apples from Japan.

At the temple nearby, there are men sitting, talking and
drinking tea, there is a middle-aged woman
arranging flowers and two others sweeping the
floor, a small boy runs from one to the other, and
each stops for a moment and bends down to listen to
him.

Outside, the crowds flow past the market stalls in all
directions, and the traffic blares forward toward the
Zhong Shan North Road, or else back toward the
Chong Ching Road.

A narrow doorway – and inside there are red candles, a
small apple-green shrine; then you see the table,
sheets of paper like the finest white cloth.

The black ink on the walls is still and yet moving:
splashed, drawn, spilled, making imageless images,
these speaking in silence:

Luminous black spiders swarm in the webs of white Non-
Being. The calligrapher's studio.

To leave the degenerate place, the place of lies and of
deceit, the place of the living and yet dead, this is
not misfortune.

Miasma in ditches and bogs, fever in swamps, corruption in
sewers. I have come from the cities of the West.
The human and truth itself cannot be found there.

But now the day fills the sky, reaching upward from the jagged edge of the mountain chain: royal purple of skyline, charcoal gray of the cloud dunes; a tinting of orange fills the sky's far depths, and the cloud shapes burn like luminous islands.

Buildings are grey and brown cubes in the lower darkness, and the air itself is sepia.

The structures of the city emerge slowly from the dark – here the green roof of a house, and there the dolmen of a chimney.

Black troughs between buildings, and a balcony on a fourth story begins to shine; dogs are moving shapes crisscrossing empty streets.

Now people themselves appear – three old men in a group walk along the street, each holding a cane, and yet they walk rapidly. Two cars pass them going the opposite way.

The traffic circle is still empty, though there are three motor bikes, and now a yellow taxi and a fruit vendor with his blue motorized cart – tomatoes, grapes, apples, sugar cane, pears.

Pedestrians here and there, and now more traffic. The stars disappear slowly from the sky like leaves from a tree in autumn; men and women show themselves now – how many will find what they are looking for today?

To write a book that will last, take yourself seriously. Then you will take what happens seriously as well – the country, the people, the world. There is no need to apologize, with a tone of constant irony, like an incessant giggle. A fool is amusing, but he is not a companion.

How can we know the truth if we are not true ourselves?
How can we tell it if we do not know it? How can we tell it even when we do? What is the price? And then, what will happen?

Yet here street signs mean nothing, and the language is a
melody of tones I can just barely discern but
cannot understand at all,
And therefore now there is only watching, listening, and
noticing small things, or noticing of larger things,
living a new life, on the other side of the earth, in a
new world.

Here there are brown leaflets like paper napkins with
magenta characters written on them, there are small
furnaces made of cinder blocks in which these are
thrown in dense bundles as offerings to the ever-
present gods.

Here there are women with yellow parasols, there are
women with babies in bright strollers,
There are old men in knit shirts and slacks, suspenders
holding up their pants, one trembling slightly is led
by the arm, he has his three daughters with him,
There are visitors with cameras, there are two monks in
yellow robes, white leggings and moccasin-like
shoes,

There are babies carried by men in white shirts with cell
phones on their leather belts,

And now there are seven steps of stone that lead to the
temple's mouth, its lower lip is a stone slab, its
gums are a threshold of wood painted red and six
inches high, a cellar floor inside.

And the Buddha sits composed in his flowing robes, the
Buddha sits looking down into his hands, which are
empty, the Buddha sits looking down into the
world.

What he sees there cannot be written in words, what he sees
there cannot be spoken, what he sees there cannot
be touched, the Buddha who, in the deer park at
Sarnath, told to five companions of his dharma.

And later you see the dragon again, this time in the winding
pathway of the alleys, in the intricate painting of a
chrysanthemum, in the subtle shadings of
shadowless calligraphy, you see the dragon dancing
on its many human feet amid fire-cracker smoke
down through the alley.

It is evening and the sky is pink and orange, the buildings
are black shoulders against the sky.

There are trucks rushing through the intersection carrying
crates of live chickens, some white some black,

There are three singers singing Taiwanese songs on a raised
platform at the corner, their mouths are open,
microphones in hands, there are no sidewalks in the
street, the street is like a fair, metal frames for street
signs are set in front of stores, there are a hundred
on this side and a hundred on the other, the crowd
gets around them in dribbles and leaks, the crowd
condenses in the middle of the street, Brownian
motion of human heads, a single human body
effervescing, froths up, overflowing bubbles faces
like flash bulbs, and a kite tail of firecrackers cannot
soar into the sky, stamps its feet hard and loud in
protest, whipping its pink ribbon – yes, it must
have been a goddess for there are pink rose petals
left on the asphalt afterward beneath an acrid mist

There is a sidewalk of uneven bricks and cracking cement,
there is a temple with a ceiling twenty feet high,
through high gaps in the walls you see three men in
leather covered arm chairs, a table of dark wood
with some papers, in the middle of the light at
center is a statue of a bald-headed man in a suit
fifteen feet high made out of poured concrete the
color of cigarette ash

There are small stores along the street where you can get
hot pot *shiao bing yo tiao tsong tz* smoked duck
vegetarian beef noodles, a huge spring role the size
of a burrito with a peanut sauce, twenty kinds of
fruit juice drunk from a plastic bag with a straw
stuck in its rear,

There are bright playing cards of street signs blocking your
way constantly, there are vendors with jewelry set
out on a black cloth set across three stools, there are
carpets hanging from a giant staple of metal pipe,
there are watches from Viet Nam, there is Turkish
ice cream, there is flat bread from Shan Dong, there
is *cho dofu* in a silver cauldron the size of a bath
tub, it has a red black sauce that smells of peppers
and chilies and tomatoes, there are bottles of yellow
Mexican beer avalanched in crushed ice, there are
offerings of food to the ever-present gods placed in
front of each shop (in front of one there's an entire
pig, huge and inert, and you notice its coarse but
floppy ears),

There are silver pails of smoking incense, there are waves
of pedestrians washing out the street itself until the
street is gone and there is only a streaming crowd,

There is the traditional night market in the open air, there is
a sudden motor bike down through, the crowd
parting like a zipper then flowing back, its fingers
clasped over its belly –

Look up now, and there are lanterns in your eye, the sky
above is black, but you cannot see it.

And later you see the tiger again, in spots of sunlight and
shadows in the depths of the walking path, in the
power of stone massed in the temple's foundation,
in the weight of stone massed in the temple's roof,
in the legs of the workman as he bends and lifts the
trowel of wet mortar, carefully, steadily, and quick;

And you see the leopard again in the hands of the therapist

straightening a spine, in the vehemence of the
cabdriver's yelling, in the speed of the cook's
precise chop,
And you see the snake again in the doctor's fingers, subtle,
strong, intelligent, precise,
And you see the crane again in the sweep of the farmhouse
roof, you see the crane in the wariness of the buyer,
you see the crane in the engineer's calculations, in
his measurements and in her clear and accurate
drawings: you see the crane, the dragon, the tiger,
the leopard, the snake, and the crane.

To leave lies and deceit behind is not a misfortune. There
who can speak the truth or even know it?
And now the radiant king, the emperor Light, sets his foot
at my doorsill.

In the park, coins of light are scattered on the tea leaves
at the bottom of the pond. Melted back to gold on
the surface, they shine there as well. I gather them
up with both hands. Haloes of coins haunt the tea-
colored water. Even in the dark of my sleep I see
sun coins.

In the hundreds of hills there was no bird's song; in the
thousands of trails no footprint. On a boat
made of three planks an old man in a hat was
fishing. A heavy snow was falling.

And yet the surface of the earth is made of pathways, and
in the air and on the sea there are more, ancient
pathways and also new. And we awake in the midst
of them.

At every point, at every moment they are leading
everywhere – north, south, east, west, in directions
still unknown.

Traces – the routes of people of every kind and of all

nations, moving ceaselessly, even where they do not seem to be, and yet they are moving.

Fish seller in the market, your gold teeth are so bright when you smile!

Those who have risen from fire smoke, from the mist and sand, those who have bargained and counted, weighing each bit, and themselves, and who had to, those who came from the green hills inland from the southern beaches and those from Guangdong, Beijing, Jing-Men, from Mongolia, and many from Fujien, those of great rank and accomplishment, money, and fame, and those lost to all memory as though they had never lived (and yet they did live), those from the valleys, from the plains, and those from the mystic and cloud-filled forests, the green cloud temple, the golden mountain, the seven spirit hill, decipherers of signs, doctors, scholars, poets, artists, chroniclers.

Those from the great desert in the west, those from the great desert of the north, from the northern cold, the sandstorms, the rocky paths, the bright meadows streaming with horses, golden grasslands like thick fur, patchwork and striped tents, heavy bright colored clothing, thick leather belts with wool shirts and vests over, silver ear rings, head scarves and neck scarves, round eyes narrow eyes round faces angular faces high cheekbones mysterious singing, the throat singing of Mongolia and Tuva, those from the cloud mists of the great river, the narrow paths over the mountains dropping hundreds of feet to the green water, the rushing current, the beginning of the white cuts and chevrons, the strength and skill of the boatmen, the thick poles that can rip the skin from a hand, that can knock out a tooth.

In much-trodden lands there are yet still great silences. You
can't know them at first, but they make their call
felt at midnight; at midday you hear, far deep in the
hives of the traffic noise, the needle that drops, the
needle that sews the shroud of the past, that points
the way to the future, that lances the heart of the
present, the moment now .

Women who arrive in a train of light, in a wake of onyx
hair with shimmers of darkest perfume and
multiplied shadows, their legs hidden in bright
skirts

And now the eye's face is shaved with light's razor, it
bleeds intoxicated blindness out into the city
crystallized in vivid confusions of space and time.

I have waited and waited – dazzle of the palm-leafed
courtyards, sharply bright, mortally wounding –
how long I have waited to touch this beauty, so
precious and so strange.

But here day fills the sky reaching upward from the jagged
edge of the mountain chain, royal purple of skyline,
carbon of cloud dunes; a tinting of orange like the
faintest tea fills the far depths of the sky somewhere
behind the mountain peaks, coming up from below.
A changing, fast and yet slow; and the cloud shapes
burn with new light.

The sun of the waters is borne once again in the depths of
the sky. Once again.

And now there are lights in windows, one here and two
there; the last clouds disperse drawn away to the
edges of the hills; dawn air is active and cool, the
scent of smoke already, and the light is orange
above the plum-colored mountainside, and the first
moving car slides along a distant street like a bead
on an abacus. A satellite dish shines lilac-white.

The street at this early hour is a deep plum color, the house fronts along the street are of gray concrete and cinder blocks unpainted, the color of cardboard, some are red brick which in this light is the color of rose petals dried stiff.

The doors are metal, painted a lacquer red and set in a framework of stones; above each there are characters the color of charcoal, telling traditional poems: silently speaking doorways, silently speaking stones, silently speaking city, even though there is already the traffic noise, though as yet it's a ways off like the sound of the sea, and in the air there are the cries of gulls that are floating down in slow spirals.

I see you now as though through dim water, as though from the depths of the past, and the buildings hang in space, the air lightening around them, above them the sky is currents passing over the hills,

And I see you now from out of the wells of the past, and the house fronts are dim facades, and I see you now and the buildings bloom out of the earth, the city blooms out of the hillsides like lichen on a rock, and I see you now, ancient, dim, and overwhelming city, ancient people.

The surface of the earth is made of pathways, and in the air and on the sea there are more. Ancient pathways and also new. We awake in the midst of them.

At every point, at every moment, they are leading everywhere – north, south, east, and west, and in still unknown directions.

Traces – the routes of people of every kind and of all nations, immemorial nations, ancient peoples, moving ceaselessly.

And now the people of today, of this time and of this place,
who step out onto the street in this dawn light, into
this morning air, beneath the opening sky – see
them:

The pastry cook, the rice noodle vender, the owner of three
fishing boats, the one who keeps a stall in the
market selling cheap watches made in Thailand, in
Viet Nam, or in the Philippines, the electrical
engineer, the security guard at the condominium
complex, the *dofu* seller in the old market, the
owner of the fireworks and incense shop, the
policeman, the betel nut girl, the dentist on the
Kuang Fu Road, the prostitute in the East Gate park,
the cabdriver, the chestnut vender in the market
near the temple, the breakfast stall cook making *dan
bing* and *bau tze*, the blue delivery truck for
drinking water, the man who drives and the one
who helps him with the heavy boxes, the engineers
on their way to work picked up in a special van, the
Canadian girl on her way to the English language
school, the children on their way in uniforms – blue
pants and white shirts for the boys, blue skirts with
pleats and white blouses for the girls – the van
driver and two attendants all in white at the hospital
entrance, helping an old woman in a wheel chair,
the nurses crossing the hospital lobby quickly, their
uniforms neat and clean, their hair fixed precisely,
inside the puzzled bored restless crowd of the
patients and patients' relatives, one old man in a
wheel chair, a green tank strapped to its side, a clear
thin tube from it into his nose, he is in pajamas and
his head is unsteady on his thin neck, his daughter
and son-in-law look after him, the crowds below
ground in the subways, stepping into cars stepping
out, the automatic doors, the polished rods overhead

the white plastic thong to grip, the slow acceleration as though up a hill but then the sudden increase the feel of a bullet that does not touch the barrel's walls, the bodies pressing near to you, sometimes against you, swayed like water weeds in a current, the bell and the clear taped voice announcing the stops, the open doors, the confusion of some coming in and some getting out, the crowds down along the Dun Hua South Road, the crowds out along the Nan Jing East Road, the crowds up and down the Zhong Shan North Road, walkers in the side street and through the alleys of side streets, browsers in front of shops for buying tea, browsers buying children's clothes, buying stationary, friends at the afternoon buffet laughing, the girls in the Japanese bakery with their aprons and white hats, the young man working in the cool convenience store, his broad white smile, his perfect teeth, the Philippina women walking down the crowded boulevard at mid-day talking and gesturing, the one tells her problem and the other listens, the teachers at the pre-school opening the office in the morning, the limousine driver getting his car ready to pick up business people at the airport that evening, the porters at the fancy hotel carrying luggage, quick polite helpful, the old man sweeping the walkway with a straw broom, a man of middle age sitting by himself on a bench, the young woman opposite and down a ways listening on earphones, the slim Cantonese woman with short cut hair helping to make *manto* with her in-laws, the Indonesian woman who works in the roadside store that sells betel nut, workmen pulling up in trucks and taxis, she runs out with a little bag, takes their coins, runs back, she has Caucasian features and is as dark as a piece of mahogany, slim arms and legs, full

breasts, white flashing teeth, she speaks good Mandarin and perfect English and she is both nanny and store worker, the new bride from Viet Nam taking out the trash as the garbage truck comes by stopping for everyone to bring their bags out and toss them in, garbage workers with yellow straw cone hats and heavy gloves, white face masks and dirty smeared clothes, the cook chopping onions carrots peppers on a chopping block in a corner eating place, steam spilling and looping around her, sweat coming out on her forehead, it is an old place with a dusty stone floor, round wooden tables, neither doors nor windows just two large openings in the stone walls so you could walk in through one and out through the other, but now it is getting dark and then, very quickly, it is night.

Awakened at five in the morning by – air raid siren?—
fire? – the police? – no – a car horn stuck? no –
someone's dog is – no – the Taoist temple down the
street, a loud ram's horn trumpet sort of thing,
pointless to name or to describe, and so we are
summoned by it – but to what?

Penetrating drill of sound pushed out into the morning, a
purple sky, dust feathery clouds, a winter dawn in
the courtyard – on the street below, a black-green
egg of leaves from which a street light is cracking
open, and buildings opposite are cubes of ash, the
lemon gray of security lights still on inside – sickly
vigilance

A girl in a black skirt hurries across the street from the pink
cellar entrance of the karaoke bar and gets into a
parked Mercedes,

Traffic is quickening already and the earliest Tai Chi
players are moving in the Shuanglien park:

All these unchanged, yet changed – mere sound, mere
noise, no utterance, music – neither of these: stern,
imploring, disruptive, ungainly sound – not
dignified, no trace of beauty in it, not human and
not animal, not mechanical – frightening, startling –
the sound of mere existence, of mere Being itself
blowing into the world from the world beyond
Being.

But now it is time to walk out into the world of Being once
again, and so in the early morning I walk through
the silent streets toward Dong Men, the East Gate.
The sun is low in the sky that lightens from indigo to violet.
Clouds move swiftly in the high sky, the breeze is
sharp and steady. Winter now in Taiwan, and the
wind from the East China Sea is cold.

Gulls dip and cross each other's paths, searching, crying
out shrill in the early sky.
The light flashes on silver water tanks that each apartment
building has on its roof, each one larger than an oil
drum.
The metal gratings on the second and third floor porches
gleam, and the light in a top floor window shines
yellow like an oil sheet in the purple light.
The silver metal doorways set in the stone or concrete walls
are shut fast. The food stalls are still closed – there
where steamed buns are kept in glass-doored
shelves and smoked ducks hang upside down in a
row on metal rods.

Stray leaves of newspaper and a pink plastic bag blow
down the street; there are four cats – one white, two
black, one orange with stripes – hurrying in
crisscrossing patterns along the street.
One of the stall owners steps out of the green doorway of a

house, wearing a red quilted jacket and blue work pants. His hair is short and grey, he has a stubble beard and he draws on his cigarette, bringing it to his mouth between thumb and forefinger. Then he spits into the gutter and lights the fire under his burnt-looking wok. The East Gate is white in the early morning air.

And again here street signs mean nothing, and again the language is a melody of tones I can only just discern and can only understand a little bit

And so I can understand nothing at all except faces, except gestures, except bodies, I can understand nothing at all except sunlight, except the white blue sky, except the revving up jet engine of the typhoon, I can understand nothing at all except laughter and eyes that watch and that observe, I can understand nothing at all except the silent thoughts conveyed in silent glances, I can understand nothing at all except small smiles given as though on the sly, except a warm firm handshake, except the rain that comes down through the grove of pines trees, except the fragrant incense in the temples, except the stillness of the temples which yet are not silent and are not closed off to the day, to the light, to the passersby, except the open air markets selling everything you name it, except the guava the mango and *bala*, the cherries strawberries bananas apples pears *ing tao*, *tsao mei*, *shang jiao*, *ping guo*, *lie tz*, except the damp bamboo leaves of the unwrapped *tzong tz*, except the fragrant steam and wicker hat boxes of the *shuei jioa*, except the ordinary quickly made but nourishing plain food, the *mi fen* from Hsinchu, the *chow fen* with small shrimp and pieces of egg, the beautiful woman with creased skin and strands of

gray hair loose around her ear who makes it, her breasts and her hips still round, her upper arms still firm, her one gold tooth, her smile that is always ready no matter how busy she is, how much I love to watch her, how much I love to say hello to her, to exchange smiles, I understand nothing except this one working woman, except this one humorous cab driver who cannot figure out where it is I want to go and who takes me around all over the place showing me the town and all with no extra charge, I can understand nothing except the desk clerk at the old flea bag hotel whose skin is the collar of a steamed bamboo leaf, whose white collar is buttoned right up and with a thin navy blue tie and who yet does not seem to perspire, who gives me directions and a smile in perfect English, except the taxis like yellow tiles cemented in a traffic jam mosaic down the length of five blocks, except the arcade sidewalks with thousands of people with tens of thousands, and sometimes it seems that every single one is beautiful, beautiful women, slim shapely men, no one is fat or ugly, no one is pompous or absurd, no one is affected, snobbish, bored, blasé, disinterested, no one is sophisticated and ironic, no one is superior and knowing, no one is phony, hypocritical, self-righteous, twisted, envious and bitter, no one stands apart from anyone, everyone is here with everybody else, moving, speaking, listening, and I understand nothing except that I am here too among them – how I love you, Taipei, where I understand nothing except the tall palm trees of the National University, the red brick buildings elegant and plain, palm trees with ribbon fingers, better than a laurel crown, a crown of jungle thicket raised up on a pillar of huge earth mover tires, crowns that are the upraised fistfuls of

hopeful green of the people themselves, broken
open canisters of green film five stories high,
illuminated salad bowls of the unlimited meal set
out for everyone, I can understand nothing except
the hills around, the mountain, showing through the
white mist in patches of green, in patches of stone
like broken off sections of cuneiform tablets, I can
understand nothing except the protests of the
farmers and fishermen in the courtyards of the
government office buildings, I can understand
nothing except the Hsi Men Ding, district of the old
film studios, the old tea houses, the meeting places
of the dissidents, the complex secret maneuvers, the
terror of the state police breaking in at night,
nothing except the arrests from which some never
returned, nothing except the self-satisfied look of
the bosses, the unspeakable vileness of the tortures,
such people are human garbage, they are piles of
shit lying in the American pig sty, the Japanese pig
sty, the Chinese pig sty, I can understand nothing
except this crowded city of Chinese faces, how I
love you, Taipei

But here and now there are the streets of night, and here
and now these are the streets of the con, the night of
the con –

Rain sliced blue light red light electric blue neon night side
street people passing shops selling Chinese herbs
pizza fruit ices Chinese tea sex toys hot pot smoked
duck *shioa bing* and *yo tiao* dresses from India and
mainland China, jewelry cheap more jewelry
expensive, the con other places sell other things
moonlight blue gray shadows through the alleyway
that winds alongside the elevated train, standing
smokers made of black ink and a belt gleam then a
match and two faces in gold chiaroscuro, trees’

steady peristalsis of shadow fronds a motor bike the
alleyway is a zipper ripped open exposing naked
silence stars above the elevated tracks the con, out
on the main drag the buildings silicon chip of night
threaded with a million codes flowing in traces
weaving the text of light-spun dreams MOTORLA
SINOPAC ACER the con mascara lash windshield
wiper rain mesh cab window tapping your fingers
palpate the flashing streets where are we going Linn
Senn Bei Lu, a fancy hotel a fat ass debouches limo
doors like gills at first porters like sucker fish
adhering to an arm a suitcase like piranha they pick
the wide flung chassis clean escort the human
remains to spot lit pools everything subdued gold
and wood gleaming, the con the women in
aquarium light and the music too loud and the
corporate hookers sauntering there in velvet
shadows they are made of silk and cosmetics a shot
of tequila Demerol for some floats them through the
back alleys and out again toward morning, but it is
the con again like one of those carnival games
where you pick the right duck out of the tunnel
here the girls come wobbling floating out,' who you
choose? who you choose?' on this street at Charlie
Brown's, Meilianne's, the Savannah, the girls from
Beijing Shanghai Guangzhou Hanoi Ho Chi Min
City Manila

But the circle of the hills around is filled with the open sky,
the sky is a mouth that sucks the green hill's
nipples, the sky is a wave of blue breaking up on the
earth shore, the white dust of clouds high up are the
shore mist, the floating spots of cloud are the
breakers' white froth

It is here that they are from, where the trees shining into the
pond make a green iris with a spot of sun in its

pupil, where tall threads grow up from the earth under the water, the open fingers of a hand holding the water's lens upward to the sky, where her hair is the falling leaves shining gold and green and faint red, where the bright yellow of hay fields is thatched into a roof of gold rippling across the light's surface, where the pieces of black soil filter down like sand through the green hourglass and their clasp down below is sticky and heavy and dense, where a million grains of wheat are falling through the waves' pulsation and shimmer, where the cells of yellow green pollen are spurted through the open shafts and held suspended like enormous freight in spot lit cables of gold dust and yet however great they never can break the eyelid of the surface but remain an eternal possible, a dream where the neurons of silver flash instantly over the bright globe as it hangs down into the sky where the silver trout have spawned and shot like arrows to the limits of his body of her body, where the seething pulp of light behind their eyes drew them upward into the funnel of sunlight where they were poured upward and through endlessly, where day and night and sun and moon shone down into the deep pool of her belly from which he drank deeply in an ecstatic thirst and where her ripples opened outward for him without limit to the edges of the world

The road goes on like a line of chalk drawn between the hills and fields that are turning deep green and lighter brown and tinted with orange light from the setting sun, the barns and houses and fence posts and tall silos, all thing standing upright are getting counterparts of shadow like stripes painted out across the world, the divided up fields of clover and

alfalfa and corn, the patches of lettuce and the low beds of the beans and tomatoes, the mirror flash of ponds set off a ways and the water holes nearby near a few old and dead trees, a few cows head down, not even bothering to look up as we pass by, the air that is cool as we drive through blowing fast and strong onto our faces, a deep rich and fresh scent in it, the scents of a hundred and a thousand things in it, hay drying in the pastures, rolled up on its side, the mud lot of the barn with pieces of torn up green grass at the edges, the grass of the lawn going away toward the farm house, the taller grass at the edge, the back yard, growing dark now where the children are still playing, where they stop now at their games to watch the first fireflies beginning to sparkle in the depths of the night fields, the smell of the fields themselves for the air is growing damper in the twilight, near the fence post by the pasture, near the plum trees that mark off the corner of the garden, near the dark gully overgrown with berry vines and sumac and the young bush-like trees

The road goes on through the rice fields set out on both sides, to the left and right, to the north and south, to the east and west, the squares of rice edged by green grass, the shallow water catching spots and glitters of sun, the straight rows of the delicate rice plants, the small stone house near the corner where an old man, wearing heavy dark gray pants, a white tea shirt, high boots on his feet, a cone shaped hat made of straw, is walking holding a pail and a small rake, gloves on his hands, where the fields of yams are planted in low tangles and are the deepest green of all, where the low wall made of red bricks fitted together encloses a farmhouse of three small buildings made of orange brick and dark stone and patches of concrete and with low swooping tile

roofs like dark swallow tails frozen motionless, where there is a small shrine a little ways past the compound with some calligraphy inside and a small green light, where beyond that on the slope of a low hill leading away into a thicket the bamboo poles are cut and set in piles on the ground, on the opposite side there are peanut plants, on this side there are plots of lettuce, cabbages and onions, there are low tomato bushes and there are melons and two kinds of beans and small square plots of corn, the fields along the opposite side have low mounds of vines and tangle being burnt and the thin white smoke flows away on the breeze, as the bus moves past under the power lines held by high towers like giants dragging wires in their hands, their shadows set out like a framework across the yellow and green fields turning pink and amber in the sunset, the road goes on and the night falls quickly as we come into the harbor and there is a long building made of tile and concrete and steel like a meeting hall and yet it is a huge fish market with neither doors nor windows just openings in the walls where small trucks and people move in and out and on the second floor you can see the people still there cleaning up under the fluorescent lights, down by the harbor there are fishing boats forty and fifty feet long, with diesel engines, dark nets drawn up on winches, piled like heavy gray mats or hanging like gigantic black lace, tied up with hawsers as thick three fingers brought together, faint white lines in the dark and the water near the pilings is almost still, the wide open water to the left leads out into the ocean itself and it is completely dark now, you can see nothing at all out there not even one single light, and farther beyond in that darkness there is China

The road goes on down through the south western hills coming into the city, down through the suburbs of Taoyuan, flat fields of rice on either side of the road, small hayfields here and there, blocks of apartments made of concrete with silver water tanks on the roof, a shrine off by itself in a field, another one close to the road, thickets of bamboo near the highway, then suddenly an open space with fifty buildings scattered in a loose arc, housing complexes, buildings with apartments for six stories up above and businesses at street level, convenience stores, garages for cars and small trucks, a scrap metal place, open fields edged with low bushes, the mountains of the central highlands visible in the distance, waves of clouds around them, then denser housing and traffic, the bus slows down, at times it nearly stops, cars and trucks, trucks with open beds with cages of chickens piled up seven rows high, another truck with cages of pigs, trucks with tanks of cooking gas larger than a scuba diver's, a trailer hauling two dozen new cars to a dealer somewhere in Taipei, the police in green uniforms, the soldiers with rifles, precise neat dress shined boots and white helmets, the toll gates and the rush of traffic speeding up after it goes through like some kind of race and a special lane for trucks

The road goes on down through the steep hills falling to the Taipei basin, the clouds above the hills on both sides, the dark thick forest on both sides and then the piled-up apartment blocks, the same concrete and tile buildings, crème colored, silver water tanks on top, crammed with people, crowded with small businesses at street level, seven eleven, Yoshinoya, magical idea, auto body shop, a clinic of the

national health service, concrete walls of the freeway, the road dipping down more, the bus speeding up where possible, and then the river and the highway across, the overpass above, the huge concrete supports, the amusement park to the right seen at treetop level, the turn off from the highway and then the Long Shan temple, the Chong Ching North Road, the Taipei Main Station, the steady raging of the traffic, the walkway over the street, the beggar lying face down, one of his arms is cut off at the elbow, both pant legs are empty sleeves below the knee, he chants and holds out a blue plastic cigar box with a splash of coins in it, a monk in yellow robes stands at the other end, alms bowl extended, showing no emotion, a small thank you if you give something, the sights of the city the steam bath air, the smell of car exhaust, the steps down into the MRT, the cool underground, gleaming tiles, a beggar in a corner sleeping on some cardboard boxes spread out, an old woman selling chewing gum, a young man playing a saxophone by himself, his case open for small change, sights of the city, sounds of the city

And I am coming to see you, riding in a cab down through the Zhong Shan North Road, riding down through the Dun Hua south road and the fancy apartment houses for rich people, tree lined boulevards, a lawn between the two lanes, wrought iron benches set out under trees, 'Little Paris' Taipei has sometimes been called, and then the Ba De Lu, the overpass, the poorer neighborhoods, and I am coming to see you, sights of the city, sounds of the city, people of the city, my people, how I love you, Taipei

And I am coming to see you, flashing past the Chang Kai Shek memorial, white gates and white stone walls

and purple roof, and I am coming to see you, I am walking down Jinn Shi street, I am walking past the Taipei House, I am walking out past Yong Chun street and down near the Jen Dow restaurant, the small hotels that rent rooms for one hour, and the cab driver with good English pulling up slow and asking me his question, Would you like a young lady for the night, sir?

And I am coming to see you, through the streets of the city, the sights and sounds, the people of the city, your people my people, and I am coming to see you past the Presidential Mansion, walking up to the Linn Senn Bei Lu, turning into an alleyway, and then another alleyway, there where Jane works, there where Lilli works, there where Sharina from Viet Nam works

And yet in the day, and every day, it is a city of work, it is a city of work, work of all kinds, city of labor, city of effort, of foresight and intelligence, city of craft and art, city of ardor, the ardor of labor and the labors of love and passion, city of building, of construction, city of the free people rising upward, city where there are crowds moving, city of traffic

And so now, and now again, there is a repeated dropping of a half filled sacks of rice, there are workmen bare chested in the heat, sweat shining on their shoulders, on their thick arms and straight firm legs

The backs of their trousers are very roundly filled, their waists are slim and they have broad shoulders; lifting, their spines stretch powerfully up and their stomachs reach upward and the v where their legs come together in the front is alive and strong and the v where their legs come together from behind is graceful and they are dropping heavy loose sacks of rice one after the other, one drops his sack setting it

down from his shoulder and it almost looks like a child there on his arm, but the warm sacks are piled onto each other in the sun, one after another of them comes and throws down his sack on top of the others before, pairs of legs move back and forth through the light, pairs of hands touch and grasp, pairs of arm lift, pairs of shoulders carry, sacks are held to one chest after another, there are sweat stains on the cloth

The backs of trousers are walking down the crowded streets, full and strong, silent and graceful, and you can feel the strength that is in them just by looking, and you feel as though you would like to look into each of them to see what is there and to touch them there, she remembers seeing the fruit piled in the market, and the bunches of onions, the rows of fish set out on ice, the hands touching everything, the men carrying large boxes easily, their fronts with their zippers tense and steady and pointing straight up like arrows, there are more men carrying heavy sacks in their arms and flinging them up onto the back of a truck with quick arches of their backs and a pushing up of their stomachs and a spring of their knees and feet, fronts of trousers, shoulders, arms and hands, moving through the crowds and along the streets and in the markets, going up and down flights of stairs with a quick energy, with no effort, loose and firm and light and weighty, sometimes keys jiggling in their pocket or a cell phone on their belt

Trousers and shirts, square shoulders, v shaped backs and narrow hips are moving through the subway, stepping into taxis, opening doors, entering silently, their backs disappearing through the glass

Pairs of hands with strong wrists, ropey forearms, pairs of hands square and with short strong fingers, pairs of

hands precise and careful, knowledgeable, skilled,
 pairs of hands that take up tools, take up hammers,
 heavy objects, wooden objects, metal, oil and
 lubricant, paint and varnish, fragrant, intoxicating,
 poisonous

Hands with lathes and drill bits, wrenches, calipers and
 spirit levels, plumb lines, weights suspended,
 hanging bags in slings, boxes set in squared off
 rows along the floors of warehouses, placed in rows
 on high metal-framed shelves, calloused hands
 around wooden broom handles, on the thick wooden
 handles of heavy sheers, in the hot dangerous
 workings of an engine, around explosive power
 lines

Hands in white sleeves cooking over hot griddles, handling
 sharp knives and cleavers swiftly, chopping orange
 carrots, yellow onions, pale green celery, frilly
 leaves of dark green lettuce, limp and crinkled, stiff
 curved up peppers, green and red, beads of water
 still on them, pale mushrooms smelling like cellar
 bins,

Hands around vats of boiling oil, hissing woks, avoiding
 clouds of burning steam, clean hands with a bead of
 sweat along a wrist wiped quickly away, fingers
 working through slick chicken breasts, inside the
 translucent ribs of a turkey, slicing pieces of a
 smoked duck with its skin the color of brass

Hands holding precise instruments, in the laboratory, in the
 clinic, in the operating room, hands working
 calculators, writing formulae, making notes

Arms moving through the crowds and along the streets and
 in the markets, in long sleeved shirts, in short
 sleeves, in work shirts, thick arms and slim, rough
 and gentle, carrying heavy boxes, carrying tools,
 carrying, guiding, showing, pointing out, gesturing
 on street corners, arms hanging loosely at sides,

arms akimbo, arms spread wide to laugh, to wave
hello, to place around a shoulder

There are shoulders moving smoothly through the crowds,
shoulders turning and moving past, shoulders
draped in thin cotton, in linen, in sweat shirts, in tea
shirts, bare shoulders, shoulders banded with leather
straps or with plastic straps or cords, carrying brief
cases, bags, carrying luggage, carrying mail,
shoulders spotted with shadows underneath the trees
of the walking path, shoulders of someone seated
and on which a child is sleeping

Sleeping faces, sleeping eyes, sleeping faces with rough
beards, sleeping heads with thick black hair, faces
turning, thinking, observing, faces and necks
turning and bending, faces speaking, listening
inclined, smiling, laughing, faces of men

Men with square jaws, sharp, defined, speaking words into
phones placed back in plastic troughs, narrow
precise lips speak into cell phones, low voices,
clear, relaxed and jocular, authoritative, strong, men
with narrow faces, men with broad grins, and men
with silent narrow eyes, men with luminous eyes
and men with thoughtful ones, quiet, with the look
of scholars, of doctors, painters and calligraphers,
the look of workmen, alert and careful, the look of
traders, active and gregarious, making jokes, the
look of bar tenders, listening, the look of monks,
silent not quiet, inwardly and outwardly knowing,
troubled men, considering, thoughtless men,
impulsive, reckless, young men on motorcycles,
driving cars fast down through the narrow
alleyways, older men sitting in the park

Lunch time and walking down the Dun Hua South Road
through the overpass with the metal sculpture of
Don Quixote on his horse I think it is, they are

tearing up the street again dark brown workmen
with no shirts, a bare pipe gleams silvery metallic
blue like a horsefly's wings two guys sit on the
truck gate eating lunch from small white boxes near
the Da Long court apartments, a woman in an
orchid pink skirt slit up the side, hair half way down
her back, silver stiletto heels, high sharp
cheekbones and dark glasses, and then she is gone
behind the wrought iron electronic gate, there are
four yellow cabs in a knot on a small side street, one
blocking the way of the other three who are
blocking each other, a vendor with a blue cart
making *neiyo bing* I would think it was too hot for
cream-filled cakes but to each his own, and down
that street or lane as they're all called some night
clubs' signs in the midday glare are like snuffed out
candles

The sun will kill you here and I stop in at a Seven Eleven
for a bottle of water the bell rings loud as I cross the
threshold, the clerk is just as quick with his 'mei
guon ling' which means welcome and a beautiful
smile too, straight white teeth broad face a flat nose
copper skin, very Taiwanese, polite and shy young
guy maybe twenty

On the Ba De Road near Taiwan TV, the stars of local
television sit-coms and soap operas loom above the
sidewalk, smiling deities at the temple gate, the blue
hot sky burns, the sun presses down, a parking
meter curves into the vaguely blue fishbowl of the
taxi cab windshield as I am opening the back seat
door, another smile and an amused nod at my
foreigner's Mandarin, and finally we're out of the
sun

Trees overshadow the tiny park a circular courtyard paved
with field stone broken in jagged piece and

cemented in a rough mosaic, two stone benches are
set at right angles to a third, everything roughly
hewn here, makeshift but beautiful anyway, rough
thoughtful beauty, dusty, old

Afternoon light is stark against the concrete wall across the
street, a new apartment house but here under the
trees it is gold and soft, bright clover shapes slide
across the stones, leaf shadows are like tiny masks,
laughing and shaking, the tree branch above is a
water serpent asleep in a green pool of light

Autumn winds are beginning to come, a typhoon two
weeks ago, usually there are old men here reading
newspapers, talking, but not today, strange since it's
beautiful today, and yet old men are unpredictable

When the breeze picks up the light shapes dance and toss,
veins dilate, brighten, scales flex, black claws of
twigs flailing, and a breathing bellows of sun-gold
roars as the wind gusts stiffening through,
light-wings flashing for a second, then everything is
quiet – on the floor the spots of light reveal a
leopard or a fawn asleep, although it is invisible

The stones are like chunks of rubble, dusty with the city's
grime, crude hacked pieces of a jig saw that will not
fit the trees' diagrams, veined with granular rivers
of cement, they are like a map of some unknown
region, ancient, forbidding

Is there a great wall here as well? Is it this thin lip of
cement along one uneven line of stones? – here,
where a red ant hurries, its shadow thrown against
some pale sand grains

Parked motorcycles crowd the sidewalk opposite leaning
the same way like toppled dominoes; the afternoon
traffic is getting heavier, soon everyone will be
getting out of work

Beautiful city, where times intersect, where the powers are

seen and not seen, where at moments a god will
touch down here or there, what will become of
you?

And yet it is a new world even though it is an old one, and
it is an old world even though it is a new, and I
enter it, a visitor from elsewhere, stepping down
from 40,000 feet, crawling through, threading my
way through the mirror world that always confronts
the traveller

Can I touch the other in any case? Can I break through the
surface of the mirror that is placed in front of me,
that rises up from the shards of buildings of the
destroyed country that I have crawled out of,
destroyed by bankers and generals and their
machinations, Where is the true homeland, where
can it be found?

Come to me now, therefore, my truly and my falsely loved,
my precious and my undeserved, you whom I
glimpsed that morning on the traffic's bank, you
whom I never knew, waiting there in line, you the
very image, moving within yourself, your time quite
different from my own, enveloping your own quite
separate and unfathomable life

You whom I saw so often, offering yourself to light and air
and wind, the crowded city took you, and you
vanished in the purple dusk: smoke of winter
evening, and my solitude is filled with grief, and yet
so suddenly you're there, becoming the very image
of desire

And now I drink the infinite perfume of your hair and bury
my face so deeply into it, drinking it in, as though at
a spring, and shake it like a scented handkerchief,
its perfume so full of presentiments and yet also of
memories, and these possess my mind, my soul, my

heart

Whole worlds are lost in its depths, if you only knew all
that I see, all that I sense and yet can barely touch,
and then cannot express at all

There is a dream inside of it, of masts and of sails, it
contains an unknown sea, a deeper space, a bluer
sky, these are in the ocean of your hair, where I hear
the singing of strange foreign songs and feel the
tropical light and warmth, there is an infinite sea in
which I glimpse ships of every kind outlined against
a sky of resonating heat

At the blazing hearth of your hair I breathe the odor of
tobacco mixed with opium and brown sugar, in the
darkened beaches of your hair the mingling scents
of tar, of musk and incense and of coconut oil, these
are what I know and you are what I dream of, in the
night of your hair I see the boundless depths of the
midnight sky, its endlessness

And so now there is a landscape where I want to take you,
and it is the landscape in which I search for you and
then it is the landscape in which I find you

But in what world is it, in what world can we know each
other, in what world do we find ourselves together?
– exploring it together, fascinated with each other
and with the mystery of each other, loving each
other, even though we do not understand each other,
even though we never will

And now we are stepping down into a different world

The sea below, green, purple, amber; ice blue sunset.
Burning cigarette end of sun. Gun barrel
of tunnel.

Bullet train flying forward. Red sepia landscape, film

frames in the windows, rushing on. Then cut by
blackness.

Compression of inward silence. The underwater shadows,
and the deeper silence, restive, leading up to the
decompression of release –

And then the bursting out into light.

And the high conic sections of light, ginger ale gold, now
step through the cabin. The huge forms of day. And
they are gathering outside the windows more
brightly still. And there is sky again. Morning.

And those who love, love for what reason? Pulled tight
entanglements of hope and fear. Hands grasping
each other, A knot wrapped in itself. Marriage.

Two heads side by side, dark entanglements bathed in the
morning's gold, shoulders and arms pressed
together. Between them dry leaves have fallen,
gathered in a sheer column burning at its tip,
burning upward through space

And the light of her face, and her mouth draws steadily on
its straw, her tongue circles it like a slow ceiling
fan, and it is her breathing itself, said sometimes to
be the soul,

Drawing yin and yang into their Taoist vertigo, tantra of
sand grain moments, as though on a still warm
beach, and the hourglass lets fall all of its gold,
buries the written insignia of her hand

And the compass legs of her legs opened above me, the
room turns, like a plane banking, and we fly with
each other into the elsewhere

And then there is a moment, it is now, and you speak it out

loudly, at first to the room itself, or to space in
general, and then it is my name, and yet I am
searching for it deep in this obscurity, where I can
never find it, yet where I must find it
And then how beautiful are, your two bare feet in the light,
O prince's daughter, the joints of your thighs are
like jewels, your belly is white lilies, is handfuls of
golden wheat, and you pull me now with both hands
drawing me up
I must gather you now, gather you slowly and carefully,
with a very precise care into the water that is filling
me

The bed is a narrow slip, a boat slip tilted down into the
lake, a green tongue of weeds rising upward into it
but with the softness of the water, the edges of the
water opening their spaces further and further up,
finding them
I am finding you more and more, you are racing ahead and
yet I am catching you anyway

But who? Who is there? Tell me who you are

We first knew each other under the spotted light and
shadow of the park's walking path, points coming
through to each other then, but only points, quick
leopard spots of perception
And our faces slowly filling in, our bodies filling in, your
arm hanging down by your side, your wrist, your
hand, your two legs in jeans, and you walk along,
striped by the light, it is a tiger sauntering through
the elastic shadows
Pools of light-spotted water, stilling at moments, letting
you show through
You are speaking to me, with your soft voice, laughing,

bright in the encompassing silence, in the humid air,
the scent of the trees, the dirt path

Our conversation is points trying to link themselves into a
chain, spots of light, trying to become a bracelet,
falling through to the silence drawing close around,
leading us into the trees that part away from the
path

You make a gesture with your hand to shoo away some
hanging leaves, and then a mosquito in front of your
face that you wave past like a bad smell and I slip
the fingers of my hand around your arm, my
fingertips touch your skin the way your hair touches
your shoulder

How real you become to me then, how real, there is a kind
of amazement that flows through both of us

Do not compare it to anything, it cannot be compared, I
want you only to remember it now

And once I kissed you very lightly, just our lips touching,
and I ran my fingers over your back and drew you
to me

I slipped my fingers beneath your shirt, touching your soft
nipples, gathering them, feeling them get fuller,
blossoming

Before long, you were naked in the middle of the room,
smiling

I tell you to stand there and close your eyes and not to
move and I put on soft music and take off the lights

You don't know where I am as I come back silently, the
hair on the back of your neck and your spine itself
all up and down feel toward me as I approach you,
there are awakenings somewhere inside your back
and two luminous points somewhere inside your
hips

You feel me there, although I am not there yet

Impossible to describe, in the darkness, her mouth, but not
speaking, she is smiling in a certain way, but she is
not speaking, and yet she is not silent

One finger, two, together, circling, inside a pocket,
searching, but slowly, searching, a finger touches,
tastes the darkness all around itself, not only at its
tip, but all around it, at its edges

A green stem in the sunlight stretched up toward its own
leaves, the stem and the leaves joined together at
that point, the light all around almost yellow, shows
a fine down on the leaves, cilia along the stem,
shining

The tip of her finger hovers along the fabric, a smile
growing inside her kiss

She touches the down of the fabric, her hand almost not
there, and yet never not there, never reaching farther
in, but never leaving, never stopping

To coax the eel from the cave, just the warmth of her body
through the water, just the movement of her hand
through the water can do this

Her thumb alone, like a brush stroke, finding the cave
mouth, finding the eel's mouth, with only the
slightest touch

The tip of her index finger, and her thumb, a gathering
motion like taking up a pinch of salt

Sliding down, my forehead against her dress, her knees fall
straight to each side, with her heels up on the bed

Sudden dark triangle, the serpent's tongue not yet the
serpent touches the apex and touches the base, her
hips bones roll a bar up toward the ceiling, her
many subtle adjustments

The honeycomb of the darkness holds landscapes like paper
 flowers opening, and she speaks to them, calling
The passageway opens itself more darkly, small leaks run
 down the wall, craze the wall more and more,
 breaking it slowly
And she holds a magic globe below her navel,
 remembering with eyes closed her incantations

Black beetles are running up and down her legs, she is
 thrilled and opens them wider, her legs shout out to
 them

And now she is a fish cast up to the air, a long hook inside
 her, she works herself trying to adjust it, trying to
 break free, but not really, catching it to herself more
 deeply

Luminous hemorrhage of night's artery, outside the blinds,
 the blinds spill a patch of wood grain, a peacock tail
 eye, on the sheet, close to the place where they are
 hurrying

She is a goldfish now, holding steady in dark water,
 drinking it with her mouth
Dipping down so far, lips, teeth touch the pool's very
 bottom

A white candle is lit inside her mouth, its light shines in a
 dark room
The candle melts against the room's low ceiling, wax
 droplets of light fall through her

He sucks the amber knots of the wood grain

He splits the grain from bottom to top, her legs flat on the
 mattress, her feet pointed outward he gathers her
 waist into his and holds her in place with his chin,

pausing then, suddenly, slowing himself, adjusting
inside her

And now his ritual can begin, and he wants it to go on
forever, gathering of crinkled ruff, slicking back
sliding in with sometimes deeper sometimes
shallower touches

All animals move through his body now, appearing and
disappearing, and sometimes he is a dog, with a
dog's panting, shallow, quick movements, or else at
times he is a lion, holding the female steady as he
enters slow, deep, the almost complete withdrawal
every time, torso very still, or at times he uses the
violence of a stallion, its tremendous suddenness, or
else he bites her – here, there – on her shoulder and
on the back of her neck, and she tingles through her
whole body everywhere as he does it, as he holds
himself into her, lining the two of them up and
holding, sinking his teeth into her, as the male shark
does to the female, or then he forces her down into a
sudden stillness, so that for just a second they are
two beetles, but then, like the blood coming back
into a leg fallen asleep, a warmth comes back into
him, and he does not move, there is a deeper
possession, and he floats upon her, over her, feeling
in rapt stillness himself inside of her, not moving at
all for long seconds

Perhaps it is then that they come together most completely,
there is a purring inside of them that they pass back
and forth, a secret language of whispers and of
breathing, not given at all to the air, nor to space,
nor to any of the others who might be around

He tries to sense all of her past lovers inside her body now,
he tries to feel all through her for the others, but
they have all vanished

She feels the warmth of him up inside of her, noting his particular style, and all men are so beautiful to her, how much she loves them, although by now she has slipped away into her own privacy, she is a dead weight nearly, and yet he does not mind, pillows pushed aside as irrelevant, and he cages her head with his forearms, his teeth set in her hair

And he is almost where she wants him to be, and yet he does not want to be there, instead he wants to be in all the places where she does not want him, and now he holds her definitively, not at any single point but everywhere

He spreads his legs wider in order to spread hers farther apart and she raises her knees and runs the inside of her feet up and down the back of his calves and her heels up and down the back of his thighs

Her movements are slow and calm like a swimmer swimming on her back and with great leisure,

But his movements are not like this and after a few minutes increasingly they are not even the slightest bit gentle and the bed shakes so that the loose head board begins to tap against the wall

If you saw them now you would know that he possesses her entirely, if you heard them you would hear at first the soft quick stamp of the mattress and his low murmurs as though of deep approval, and you would hear her quick high pants that sound like pleadings, and then you would hear his heavy throaty sounds and her response to them as he grips her with all his strength

How hard men can sometimes grip women at such moments, how deeply the glans penetrates, and then at last you would hear his low rhythmic ultimate

sounds, and her cries that show she is completely
his now, and she experiences a sort of ecstasy, even
though it is all quite ordinary
And he possesses her completely, even though he is only
one of many, and he leaves the very substance of
himself inside of her, and in recesses of her memory
she will never forget his particular ways and his
body, for every man is different from every other
one, and at a certain level she loves every one of
them, and remembers every one of them
He tells her all of this in inarticulate murmurs and she
agrees to it into his ear, but revises it all one second
later, somewhere inside her brow
He knows that she is doing this, and that she must, and so
he assuages her, stilling himself within her for a few
moments, for he must consider what she is
But then the process must start once more, each time as
though from a different angle
Now he gives up subtlety completely, but in such a way
that neither of them can know where these things
will lead
She hangs on to him, holding on, as he rushes ahead
grabbing further pieces of her sequentially under the
loose sheet
Her knees point outward, only his lower back seems to
move, and the room is almost silent
She is pummeled with great care, with murmured relish, by
the fists that his whole body is, it is not merely
penetration, it is everything, his eyes are narrowed
in concentration, an undeniable power is his
And so now, far from brutal, though brutal, a profound
fastidiousness possesses him
He touches her everywhere through her skin, through her
legs, through her hips and her belly, her tongue is
for him the miracle of all
What is it, a deep kiss? – he is searching through the page

of this open book, he is searching this one leaf of an infinite tree, a sacred tree, irreplaceable

His hands run up and down her sides and then he gathers her thighs around himself, she crosses her ankles behind him and is stroking his hip bones with the inside of both her thighs, raking them behind his round tight buttocks now and then, and she feels the strength of his hips and legs and thighs

How women love a physically strong man, not to be dominated by him but to feel his massive and rough power, so different from their own flexible strength

And she wants to grip him with a gritty satisfaction like gripping a rough coarse beautiful clean cloth, like running your fingers through rough prickly warm sand, feeling his deep rough power and exciting strength, it is the reason women gasp and groan the way they do, and so it is as though her thighs are lips and his pelvis is a cock, and she wants his entire body to orgasm inside of her and all around her, she wants to feel his excitement get more and more frenzied, as it always does

And so in the only secrecy that is shared, he divulges his secrets into her, and she opens her mouth to take them and then he speaks to her more loudly still, emphatically, and they both say the same to each other, confessions torn out by him, and yet by her, divulged spoken into her, and into him, in a way she can never un-speak, in a way he can never un-hear

These thoughts swarm like blood cells inside him, the handle so strong then, she cannot get away from it, yet she does not want to, it hurts and yet still she

swallows around it, her belly swallows around it,
and then all the rest of her does
Her two legs, the inner edge, like index finger and thumb,
spread, are holding an invisible something, with
tension, behind his back
She is lifting this heavy thing and he is helping her lift,
crepe mouth of the gladiola, wood grain of handle,
gardener's hand working the spade to the ground
and now she lies on a dim bed sheet, her thighs
point to the wall past her head
And they are two dogs made of butter in the green
moonlight, sliding together
Their base melting partly away, he flows behind her, and
they are two layers of marble grinding a feather
between them
He is a gargoyle impending her right shoulder, she is a wolf
snarling back smiling, her eyes closed, and her face
is still for a moment, her mouth open like a
ceramic figurine
And his pelvis is a fiddlehead fern curled upward to hers,
his hand on the globe of her buttocks, and he pushes
it with slow rhythmic statements forward and up
He seems to be looking down into her, and he kisses her up
and down her back, placing his mouth on her
shoulder, cupping her two breasts gently with his
palms, and his love for her then is complete

It is morning, and he has fallen face down onto the sand,
gathering it toward his chest with both his forearms,
trying to hold it with his elbows, gripping onto it
deeper with his stomach, which cannot quite grasp,
and therefore it is helped by a third hand, pushing
up under the edge of the wooden table that he is, yet
so heavy, although so light, so light, and the legs hit
the floor, here, there, there

He is an inch worm on the leaf of her belly, there is a ledge inside her and his throat is placed onto it, a cord is gathered around it but his neck rejoices in the bumper of milkweed placed beneath his chin, he shrugs his shoulders more quickly as though to work himself free of his shirt, his arm tries to punch itself free of its sleeve, he is a car through a car wash with pinpricks of effervescent damp air and both his throats are shouting out into the space ahead of them, the place they are trying to get to which they can never reach, never come near

The underside of a fish, the water streaming past, and a line in its mouth, runs the whole length of its belly fastened to a point at the river's bottom, there is a ledge inside her and his throat is placed onto it, a shell forming around his yoke, a hand grabs a weed and pulls it by the roots, there is a clod of dirt there and crumbs sprinkle down onto the hand held out, and her hand is moving its fingers underneath him, feeling the grains fall

In travail and yet dreaming as he is now, someone holds a dandelion puff near her ear, blowing onto it, then laughing into it and blowing some more, and then she begins to laugh too, although more loudly, her spine laughs and the two candles lit inside her hips are finally blown out

She feels the candle smoke wound to a thread inside of her pulled upward now, and a loud gust of laughter

His face dips down into the streaming water, and he seems to be drinking from an invisible fountain near her cheek, he sees the joke now, far down somewhere in the mattress, he must nail its head, once, twice – trying to touch it in some way, and then he tries to taste it inside her shoulder, inside her hair, and then there is another loud gust of laughter, and there is

hilarity in the room, quaking adjustments of space
itself, the triviality of time

They hold the thread between them with their two
stomachs, trying to hold it, but it slips away and
they must find it, trying to hold it longer, they tickle
each other with the feather they have held between
them through the whole night, in doing this they
invent ten-thousand new kinds of laughter, and they
laugh out loud for everybody else to hear

He is working it around inside of her, she is smiling at him
all the while, she knows he can never reach what he
is aiming for, and she feels his other part,
depending, knocking, in its sweetness, and she
brushes her fingernails around them as though to
twirl them into a knot, how cool they are and lovely
against her palm as she holds him there, and they
study each other's face and exchange a thousand
secret jokes, in doing so they invent a thousand new
kinds of laughter, and they laugh out loud for
everyone to hear, this is the secrecy that does not
need privacy and it entangles their fingers and toes
in each other, wraps their arms around each other,
like two windblown sweaters on a clothesline

Embracing then he feels downward entirely for the rest of
her, she feels for him with her whole body, there is
a new understanding then between them, and she
knows what he is thinking

Now he is a vine that opens all its leaves, drawing in her
sun, soaking in her rain, the bottle is quite full and
so it only waits to be poured, but he will not pour it
out yet

And so once more he is working a feather around inside of
her, her legs are two feathers up and down the back
of his

In this a man knows the deepest possible delight, it is not
pleasure, it is not joy, it is delight, knowing no time
but only rhythm, knowing no self but only selves,
skin within skin, grasped, smoothed out, spread
away, re-grasped, drawn around and in

Someone is pulling her veils down from her and gathering
them around himself, working himself further into
them, never losing his grip, never satisfied,
grabbing always more, she is the unaccountable, the
newly found treasure, the irreplaceable

And she opens herself to all of him now, and she opens
every part, she is like a star fish on a beach, his sun
all the warmth and light around her, her nipples
blossoming, reaching their petals to the air, and the
closed eyelid between her two legs weeps for joy

He places both his hands underneath her buttocks touching
her shoulder with his throat, moving only a part of
himself, with all the rhythmic energy and precision
of a workman, pushing her fabric up into a tent then
pulling it all back down, reshaped to an impression
of his entrances and exits; loose flowing skin more
alive than any strength can be, inexhaustible, subtle,
soft, and so he lets it stay bunched up just a little bit
inside the frills, the loose sheet softly around his
waist settled over his hips and the back of his legs,
and he murmurs kisses into her ear

Her thighs still holding him, she slides her heels down to
feel his weight, and he rests for long minutes
between her legs, which she spreads out still more
for him and he nearly sleeps then, when he wakes
she smiles, kisses him, sliding the edge of one foot
along his calf, twirling the frayed end of a rope with
her finger tips, until it fills her grasp again
completely, a thick line that she draws him forward
with, and he begins to move over her like a tortoise,

as she puts the wet leaf of her tongue between his teeth and then raises her chin as though she were opening her legs to let him suck the top of her throat all the way down to its root, she gives him both her breasts now, opening her arms and her ribs and her skin to his biting and pulling, delighting in the feel of his teeth and tongue, the sand prickling of his beard, his warm tap against her thigh, and she opens her lips wider for his tongue and then to his whole mouth, raising her navel up to give him more, wanting to give him everything

But now there is someone undressing her very quickly, plucking straps down, unsnapping, peeling, directing, and yet she stands there still and straight for him, smiling, waiting for a kiss on her cheek, perhaps then heavy hands against her shoulders weigh her down, her breasts smearing flat against his stomach, her throat pressed against a zipper, then holding it up by the long neck inspecting with a pointed tongue, speaking to it with her pouted lips, giving her face to its quick jabs, then opening her star for it as well, one ear pressed to the carpet, a mushroom cap worked into a throat held open for long minutes as she gags inside her abdomen from it as though she were suspended from a hook

And then there is a thick root sliding through her, her wrists are held above her head, her legs are free, at moments they search through space like a lobster's feelers, and one of his arms grasps her around the middle, she is so small and light in his grip, she is surprised at herself as she tips her body left and right in rocking movements, she is like a moth in the spider's clench in which she cries out three times in shrill sharp gasps, not of pain, not of pleasure, she screams in something other,

something more, this is what he has been wanting
all along, and he wrings her over and over like a
cloth

She screams over and over, and he hears something
amazing in her voice, he feels it through her shaking
legs; her sounds draw all of space and time into
themselves, they suck it in and spit it out in gulping
waves, like a drowning man gulping air

There is an eel inside her, gripping her bone in its jaws,
tearing at it, and its body, which is a tail, is a ribbon,
is a banner tickling her at a hundred points, and the
skin of her whole body feels like a dandelion puff,
she spasms and flexes back arching, clenching,
opening further, breaking apart for him, and he
places the end of himself at her opening for one
moment, until she cries out for him again, and then
he flows up through her like a whole tree coming up
from the ground in one instant, branching upward
through her back and out through her arms, her legs
are hanging down, her legs are limp as he crams all
of himself up and in to her and then scoops her
toward himself like a man pulling a shirt down over
his head, and she feel his sliding in all the way up
into her stomach and his drawing out all the way
down

How smooth it is and how strong down through the middle,
a metal poker covered with silk and blunted with
velvet, and she wishes she had hands inside of her
belly to draw it in deeper, to hold it, to let it go
again, to let it play, not knowing where it will touch
next

She wishes she had two hands inside her belly to hold it,
and so she rows her hips faster to draw him in and
keep him, with his deep hovering movement, like a

wasp against the air, he hovers into her and touches into her, and she aches with a gaping passivity that can never be overcome, which he surpasses with a few sharp strikes

He can feel her feel all of this, he feels her needing him, at first she had accepted and then she had enjoyed, delighted, played, but now he knew that she needed, her opening was a channel that hung onto him, worked itself apart to let him, sucking back around to grasp, to tease, torment, the slippery ecstatic tickling of a woman's body around a man's, maddening it until it stands beside itself

How much he loves her now, even though he is hurting her; how he would give her all of his life, even though he is killing her, how he would give her everything he has, even though he is taking everything

And if you saw them now, as though from above, you would see him kiss her belly with kisses that seem like silent cries shouted into her skin, you would see her lying still, eyes closed, her arms draped loosely around his neck as with a fierce enthusiasm he puts all his strength into her, wanting to lift her from the bed and see her first accepting, but then quickly meeting him, her thighs stroking his sides, the way the calipers of her fingers once selected and assessed, until at last you see her become nearly still, and he turns into something different, butting her forward, the top of her head against the sheet, and so she lifts his heavy wet laundry up from the basket between her legs and heaves it onto her chest repeatedly, he is several men now trying to rush through a door fighting each other, collapsing, melting back into one, shrinking away, leaving just empty trousers behind

Her two legs, their inner edge, like index finger and thumb,

spread, holding an invisible something, tensely,
behind his back, she is lifting this heavy thing and
he is helping her lift; crepe mouth of the gladiola,
wood grain of handle, the gardener's hand working
the spade to the ground

And then you would see her lying on a low black couch,
her thighs pointing to the wall behind, as a shadow
that is very tall and broad places a third forearm
upon her, asking, spoon against spoon but with
fingertips playing through harp strings she directs
him in, she is a throat that can swallow the longest
swords, circling her hips, feeling it, knowing,
pushing back, balancing all his weight on two soft
springs, levitating him, despite his frantic shoving, a
huge ball rolling in a small socket, a piston carried
in a silk purse, until at last she crosses her ankles
behind him, and with her arms spread out like wings
stretches her nipples up into the dark, her legs are
like a tuning fork around his waist, and she tingles
everywhere, the light in the room is like fine bright
hairs stood on end, with her chin tipped up she
squeezes the milk from the sponge, pulling it
forward a bit, wanting to see, feeling the warm first
drops of the rain

And now with her eyes like slits she is wetting his rough
beard with the flat of her tongue, she is a kitten
lapping as he swizzles himself around in her glass
Again he pushes with slow rhythmic statements forward
and up, it is like the water at night against the
wooden pier, heavy bumpers have been hung from
the dock and long weeds trail in scarves, she
reaches back, she is a line securing him, her palm as
light as a bird's nest, and then she weighs up his
coins, counting them one by one through the bag,
the strings of his purse are drawn tight and then

enormously opened, she can feel this about to be as she skims quickly, back and forth, through his pages, there is a cord that ties all his cloth into a pucker, and she pulls at its string to undo it, she does this with a conscious design and method yet the invisible hand that has been passing all night long over his body and whose fingers race up like dry leaves in a gust between his legs still keeps its grip on a slipping jar

He seems to be looking down into her pelvis as he grabs inside of her more and for a moment, its throat choked off by a picket fence, there is a dog barking in her and then its jaws grip her hand playfully, its wet tongue licking happy and excited

In the room there are men coming and going through him, grasping and holding, lifting with pairs of arms, carrying with bare shoulders, holding tightly with strong arms, holding against with their bare chests, with sweat coming under their arms and across their stomachs, with stomachs that push and stay tight against and steady, with pairs of legs coming together strongly in the front and pairs of legs coming together in a slit behind, with their backs that arch up, with the half globes of their hips full and carrying with sudden spring-like movements that come from inside of them, pairs of knees flexing and pairs of ankles and feet pushing against the ground

In the room the loose sacks of rice warmed by the sun they are being thrown down heavily on the bed, they are thrown down into a pile on top of each other, one man comes and then another, each throwing down his sack, the bed is weighed down more and more heavily, and the weight makes everything tense and alive, she reaches up both of her arms to take it

She feels the pairs of arms, she feels the strength of each,
 the warmth of the fabric and the softness, the
 precise joining of the cuff, the wrinkles, the gather,
 the smoothing out, the strength of the arm inside
 and the definition of each of its muscles – to hold
 out your arms, to draw the warm strong quick arm
 so alive and unpredictable from out of every sleeve
 Foreskin more alive than any penis, inexhaustible, subtle,
 soft, feeling so deep in all its surfaces, waking to its
 own touch and to all others, anticipating feeling and
 extending it, brutal literal cock, endless alive
 foreskin
 Frenulum, precise jointure at the underside, endlessly
 shouting uvula of a throat, the moist root and tongue
 cord, the point where stem becomes leaf
 Glans, a name meaning acorn, and yet I say it is a leaf, it is
 a leaf whose webbing of infinitesimal veins is
 flushed with whole torrents of light and of warmth
 filling up the most finely woven threads, it is a cob
 web holding heavy beads of rain
 And yet there is a power as well, for now you would see
 them stretched at midday painted in dark stripes by
 venetian blinds as their navels fitted together are
 like the two halves of a locket shut, and he is
 moving not one part but only one part of one part,
 the base of his stomach seeming to have its own
 jointure and a long peg finds its hole so that the
 whole bed frame is shaking visibly
 Watching from behind you see the globes of his hips
 striped with a bar of shadow and hollowed in their
 rapid flexing, his thighs are pressed flat, his legs are
 a braced v shape, his spine is as strong as a curved
 spar, the vertebrae are a string of beads underneath
 a linen cloth, the striated shadows of all the muscles
 in his back can be seen quite clearly now, the
 sunflowers of her nipples taking in his warmth

And yet he is looking into something in the space just
above her, she watches his chest and his shoulders
and the curve of his throat but then at last she closes
her eyes, the fingers of both her hands touching at
her own shoulders, sometimes it is like when a man
scrubs under one arm with a soapy cloth, sometimes
it is like when a fish whips its tail when it is lifted
from the water

And he would like to do this with all the women of the
world, she would like to do it with all the men that
she sees on the street, he wishes he could be inside
her still further, she wishes he could reach up into
her throat, he wishes he could reach into her still
more firmly, she wishes he could break her open all
the way, he wishes he were greater to do even more
and she wishes he were everywhere from the heels
of her feet up to the top of her head

It is night and someone is running his tongue up and down
her back and another is feeding her from the front, it
is night and the first one enters and withdraws,
withdraws and enters, entrance filling to its own
brim and falling backward to its drawing down, he
has a hand on the small of her back and is deeply
absorbed in his own motions, it is night and the man
in front of her feeds the mouth to her tongue, he
enters the vagina of her throat, he enters her from
behind and the other one from the front and she is
pressed between them, she is a flower pressed
between the pages of a heavy book, she is smiling
to the man before her and pressing her head back to
the man behind

Vagina, fullest, densest blossom drawn back down into its stem, stem and leaves and roots filling with whole capillary webs of sun, of warmth, filling with whole days of rain, creased fabric made entirely of frills, curled wet tongue around a finger feeling carefully inside a mouth, mouth kissing deeply with always parted lips

Softest lips called labia, but I say they are the softest lips, clitoris which means to hide and yet how loudly it declares itself

Womb, secret center never touched, as when the light is focused by a lens into a lemon slice of sun, there where five fingertips might come together

Mouth that is not only for saying words, mouth that is not just for eating, tongue that is a whole life in itself, hands that are not hands for working, fingers doing more than counting, hands that grasp each other, fingers that lace together, tense basket weave of man and woman, man and man, woman and woman, eyes that look into each other, seeing the world only through this lens, widening and deepening, surfaces becoming globes

Someone is swimming through her streams, through her river, someone is working with loose ankles and knees, the fluid intertwining of two legs through the water, the quick interweaving of leg around leg, of water and water

He is a boat weighed with a heavy weight and tied up in a slip, the water all around at the front and down along the sides and she is the warm spring soil, and a hand like the points of a wooden rake is making its furrows

He is the stem and leaves of a tomato plant slicked back in a rain shower, water dripping down the stem and around the small fruit

She is the wishbone of a young sapling, he is the shoots of
the bean vines arching up through the ground
She is the leaves of the tree itself tousled into spirals and
twists, he is the wind blowing through with sharp
rain with bits of sand scouring the bark

She is the garden's earth after a shower, he is a bare foot
making a long print
She is two roses coming from the same stem, he is three
fingers feeling their silk as a tailor feels the most
expensive cloth
She is two sunflowers side by side, he is the violet blue sky
that drinks them
She is slim poles for the pole beans chopped and gathered
in a far wood, he is the rope that holds them in a
bundle, fibers the color of straw and rough as a
horse blanket, braided, strong, scratchy against the
hand
She is three pale eggs in a nest with leaf shadows on them,
his breast is full and beating and very warm
She is three white lilies with their throats open, he is the
long spears of green grass around
She is the dark green leaves of the plum tree, he is the small
round fruit hanging between
She is the broad papery leaves of the green squash, he is the
vine beneath warmed in the hot sun that shines
through in two yellow slants
She is the soft heart shaped leaves of the pea vines, he is
the green stems clutching, twining and tangling
She is the fragrant velvet green of the basil leaves, he is the
small tight buds held between

He is the branches of the plum tree with their sticky gum,
she is the fragrance of the plum itself grassy and
sweet

He is the green jade of the watermelon, she is the pink

insides the color of a peony
He is the green marble of the honeydew, she is the pale
 seeds inside as though of sunflowers
He is the tough hide of the cantaloupe the color of an
 almond's shell with a webbing of light green and
 with a musky scent
She is the smooth inside as slippery as a melting ice cube
 and with a sticky juice
She is the soft black berries fully ripe like sparkly ink, he is
 the thick stem like a rhubarb cane and its papery
 green leaves
She is shadows in the vines and leaves damp and cool and
 with a cob web feel, he is the down pour of sun as
 hot as lemonade
She is the soft dirt black and sticky after the rain, he is the
 black grit itself with a couple small stones
She is the granular web of the dirt that can be traced in with
 a finger, and dried on your finger later it is not
 sandy but like a burnt bread crust, he is the very dry
 dirt the color of lamp black and pouring through
 your fingers like coarse flour

He is the strong chest of the earth whose beating heart is
 like the sun, she is the warmth of the air in the
 summer afternoon, humid and still
He is the embrace of the grass itself that holds the entire
 day in its wide palm, she is the lines and fibers in
 the palm, intricate and fine
He is the soil underneath the grass that bathes it in its dews,
 she is like the grass itself, a covering like the most
 beautiful cloth
He is the deep shelf of rock underneath the soil, supporting
 layer upon layer as the bones support the muscles
 and the skin, she is the webbing of dark veins like
 the flesh of the whole earth
She is the deep heart at the core of all growing things, heart

like the yoke of an egg, he is the growing itself and
 the energy in it like a spring that steadily expands
 She is the opening and the flush of the streams that fill the
 soil, he is the waves of the streams and the crest of
 each wave
 She is the full level held within each single ripe thing, he is
 the brim of the rain drop hanging just past the leaf's
 edge
 She is like the ripe plum the ripe peach the ripened pear he
 is like the stem from which each one hangs, he is
 like the branch from which they do
 He is like the power of the water of the waves and of the
 wind, she is like the rippled openings in the waves
 of grass, the shaking swaying of the tree tops the
 low dark bushes
 He is like the lightning cutting down through the night's
 bark, she is like the tall tree standing by itself and
 its white denuded boll
 He is like a rainstorm with misty plumb lines of rain, with
 pummeling glass beads, she is like the open face of
 the earth taking all and giving back fields of flowers
 as though out of a breast pocket
 He is like the wide stillness after the storm a few drops
 tapping a few birds singing here and there, she is
 like the humid air itself, cooler now, and with an
 ever deepening scent
 She is like the air of spring that sprays your face with shore
 mist raindrops, he is like the paths in the field
 leading up to the apple orchard, partly of dirt and
 mud and partly of stone
 She is like the air of summer that smells of flowers and
 black dirt and sun, he is like the heat in the air, the
 buzz of flies restless near a cobweb pane
 She is like the air of autumn, the burning up of the year, he
 is like the bright flash in the flaking rain-soaked
 trees, forsythia yellow and gold

She is like the air of the winter months, pure and clean and
bright, he is like the winter moon, shining down on
the open snow field

How many kinds of beauty are there in the world, and in
how many places are they found, how many kinds
of beauty are there in each woman, and in each
man, and in how many places are these found?

He is the squared off frame made of bamboo poles, she is
the curled leaves spiraling around, the chins of their
flowers resting on its shoulder

He is a white clothesline stretched across the light, she is
the clothes hanging with arms spread out and
growing warm in the sun

He is the white picket fence along the yard, she is the lilacs
there and the gladiolas burning in sunlight

He is the wooden frame for the windows, she is the window
glass reflecting the sky, the trees

He is the wooden frame for the hot bed made of old boards,
a glass door set over it as a roof to gather the light,
she is the bed itself with rows of cup-like hollows
and green shoots standing

He is the clear windows of the green house in which a
dozen suns are shining, she is the lemon tree quite
still in the warm sweet air

He is the post at the corner of the garden where three wire
fences come together, she is the webbing of green
vines over it, it is a piece of drift wood from a green
sea, she is the water underneath each swell

It is the green of the lake water that blooms in the later
spring, a pea green film of pollen on the surface,
green dust of pollen filling its atmosphere

This is what they have come from, she was the weeds soft
yellow buds, he was the dark braids the color of a

fir tree

She was the concave swell along the surface, filled with a
million seeds, he was the spots of sunlight set down
through

She was the luminous depths of amber, he was the long
bent fingers reaching up, he was the dark fish
haunting, their shadows cast across shaded stones,
she was the moss beneath with its green fuzz and
light sparkles

He was the shelly bottom of the shallows, and she was the
water wiping across them, she was the slit open
purse of the milkweed with its sticky juice, he was
the startled seeds of white feathers dispersed
through the field

She is the hollow of cool air in the hill's damp shade, he is
the black soil underneath the tree

She is the soft tickling carpet of the green grass itself, he is
the prickly crab grass, the tough rooted dandelion,
the arching green pink stem with its frothy white
juice

She is the leaves of the giant sunflower, strangest most
uncanny of all flowers, he is the dense velvet of its
wide iris, he is the center of its gaping mouth

She is the soft fabric of the sunflower's petals and the
heaviness of its bending neck, he is the flexible
strong holding of the stem as thick as a small tree,
the dirt spotted coarse that has pushed open layers
of earth

The leaves of the sunflower seem to be hiding from view
an invisible body, it has leaf covers for two breasts
and for the jointure between two legs, he is the
sunlight's fingers reaching down through its
streaming hair

He is the light itself which is the sun burning hot on your face as you stand leaning with one hand on the hacked up trunk of the telephone pole, you feel the hot light on your hair and on your neck and on your shoulder and arm, the rough splinters of wood are warm also, it is a long silent afternoon and the heat itself hums in the trees, she is the pulsing trees all around, licked over by tongues of wind, with currents of breeze, opened up with clover shaped crackings of light

She is the warm air steady on your face as you run down the gully's slope and run across the bright green field to meet your friends, the grass is springy underneath your foot, it is thick and tangles your legs and you have to lift your knees high to get through, he is the shoe pushing through the thick tangles of the grass, he is the foot inside it pushing and flexing, she is the elastic sock around the ankle, she is the strong plain fabric of the pants

How beautiful the green of the field is, the blue of the sky, a light blue that is yet so deep, deeper than any color is, bottomless the depths of the sky, and how I feel dizzy on the stem of my legs looking up into it, and how my head is like a leaf blown around weightless and spinning, and yet how beautiful she is to him in her dress of soft cotton, in her dress of green silk, and how beautiful he is to her in his dark trousers, trim and straight, and in his clean white shirt

He is the rain showering down on your face as you look up into it, you feel the rain water on your ear and on your forehead and on your nose and you open your mouth as though to drink from the sky itself, it is a hot still day and the heat is like a pool of water that ripples outward when something is poured down

into it, it is a hot still afternoon and the trees had been as though asleep, but now they are as though beginning to wake up, even the grass had been asleep but now the grass too is awakening, even the flowers had been stunned in the hot sunlight their colors looking pale, but now their colors have deepened and they are vibrating visibly, and she is the listening of the petals and of the stems and of the trees and grass

He is the road down through the low hills leading out of town, down along where there are garden plots set out with crossed sticks catching sunlight, wicker basket arbors shaded in with roses and grapes, and there are straight rows of lettuce, green peppers and neat rows of corn, each plant showing separate in the slanted light, the dairy farms spread out wide to the left and to the right, the gray slat boards of the pen, the silver drinking trough, a pump behind it, dark spots of the cattle on the yellow green sun table of the hill

She is the open troughs of the ploughed up fields turning amber and gold, the crowded together corn of the enormous open with waves moving across it like the green surface of a pond, with wind moving through it as across a lake, shadows stretching out along the road's shoulder, the shadows of the high tension poles that rise ten stories high, the fan blades of the wind mills turning with strange slowness

She is the green bright hills spread out like the green moss clinging to a tree, the rock and soil underneath is the tree's bark, the fields are a green blanket thrown out in a rippling wave and then falling into place, she is the huge spaces where the roads do not cut, she is the reaching up and back of the farthest hill line as

you drive along, two lone tall trees like green buds
sucked up by the blue sky

In the dark room, in the small dark room with one bed, one
dresser, old and with strange scorings along one
side, one dripping air conditioner, one faintly
yellow light near the cheap vanity

In the dark room where there is a shower tap around the
corner, the floor tiles always faintly slippery, an
industrial chemical smell, or sometimes a camphor
smell, and near the toilet a plastic pail with a plastic
liner into which one drops the used toilet paper,
smeared with shit, because the plumbing cannot
accept it, you drop it there and a girl will take it out
later, and there is a roach in the corner looking
black in the dim light, then gone, and in the room
there is a table for giving massages covered by a
sheet of white paper, the table is three feet wide and
six feet long and it feels just like a weight lifting
bench, there is an amber light above the door, there
is an intercom near the door but it does not work, a
remnant of better times, there is the smell of
camphor and of roach spray that lingers in the back
of your throat

And yet how beautiful you are in the dim room, how
beautiful you are in your life so different from mine,
how beautiful you are, your slim soft arms, your
shoulders, the hollow near your collar bone, the side
of your neck, the black hair spilling there into a
whirlpool, your ear like a little shell, your high
cheek bones, your wide mouth your white teeth,
your broad flat nose your deep eyes very round and
almond like both at once, uncanny eyes, how
beautiful you are, your chest, your ribs, your
breathing that I can feel, your beating heart that I

can hear, your soft breasts, the dark medallions of
your nipples, your belly, your navel, how beautiful
your vagina is to me, a crease that opens into folds
and then more folds and then a small channel inside
of you, how beautiful your legs are, how beautiful
your ankles and your two bare feet, how beautiful
are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter

Who are you, you are from Tao Yuan where your mother is
a hairdresser and your father tends bar, your brother
drives a delivery truck, hauling boxes of drinking
water, heavy boxes in 100 degree heat all day long,
you have a day job at a day care center and you do
this on the side, they do not know, no one knows
your real name

Who are you, you are from Chia Yi, and your mother who
is dead used to harvest tea leaves, all day with a
broad hat covered with a cloth, face veiled by mesh,
looking a bit like a bee keeper, breaking tea leaves
skillfully, she did not know that you do this, you go
to the temple every day and pray that she cannot see
you, that no one ever knows

Who are you, you are from Iy Lan, where the eastern shore
is swept through by typhoons about once a month,
you are from the eastern coast where your brothers
are fishermen, your parents are dead since you were
seven, you have one younger sister and no one
knows that you do this, no one knows your real
name

Who are you, you are from Ping Dong, the old time city in
the far south, at the island's southern tip, filled with
gangsters and with few foreigners and so for this
reason I am very strange to you and you are very

shy and yet still friendly, no one knows that you do
this, no one knows your real name

Who are you, your parents own a candy store in
Shuanglien, an old part of the city, you work in
the open air market there that runs the length of five
city blocks, *laubahn* and his wife make *bau tz* and
you help and wait on customers, no one knows that
you do this, no one knows your real name

Who am I? I am no one I am from nowhere

Here is my blood, take the blood out of my veins, I give it
to you now, I pour it out for you now, endless
libation, here is my face for you to wear if you
should want to, here is my skin to cover you and to
protect you always, here are my two eyes to watch
over you, my two hands to give you anything you
want, my two arms to embrace you now and in all
time to come, wherever you may go, and here and
now – in this pit this hole this sewer drain to which
the managers of the new world order and the free
market have consigned you

Here is my blood, take the blood out of my veins, I give it
to you now, may you live forever, may you live
beyond me into the new world that I can only
glimpse in moments of intoxication, stricken blind,
rendered mute by your beauty, your living body,
your incomparable soul, take the blood out of my
veins I give it to you now so that you might live
forever in a new place that is not this place

How beautiful you are, your back and narrow shoulders
dim and yet so clearly visible in the darkness, let me
touch you everywhere and let my lips pass over
you, over your brow so high and perfect, thoughtful

and secretive, down through the slight hollow
between your eyebrows, and as I kiss you there I
can feel them against my lips

Let me kiss you now again and my lips pass over you, over
your eyelids closed now and I feel your lashes, what
are your eyes seeing as you lie there, what do they
ever see, tell me, I want to know everything about
you, present past and future, how beautiful you are
in the dim room in the darkness, how perfect and
how fragile

They spit in your face and tell you it's raining, the bosses,
they spit in your face and tell you it's raining, the
feminists, the professors, the liars, they spit in your
face and tell you it's raining, the soldiers, the
generals, the police, such people are human
garbage, they are piles of shit lying in the American
pig sty

They spit in your face and tell you it's raining, the
investors, they spit in your face and tell you it's
raining, the managers, the accountants, such people
are human garbage, they are piles of shit lying in
the American pig sty

You Mao Tse Tung, supposed leader of the people's party,
British Empire stooge, my poem outlasts your half-
assed revolution, one power comes from the barrel
of a gun, but a greater one comes from my words,
these

You American presidents, almost all of you, being merely
wind you do not even deserve to be shit upon,
therefore I merely fart into your collective face, and
I direct all the birds of the air to inundate Mt.
Rushmore in bird shit

I do not say this for you, I do not write this for you,
feminist scum, it is not addressed to any American
woman of this generation or of any possible
generation, it is not addressed to the Americans, it is
addressed to the others, the people to come

I do not write this for you J__ G__ J__ A__, H__ V__,
H__ B__, R__ S__ and all the others here suitably
nameless, as they will be in all future time when
this is read and their meaningless drivel is forgotten,
contemptible trivializers of the art of poetry, may
their faces be shoved into the urinal of a Taipei
massage parlor

You L__ P__ H__, you C__ Q__ -X__ you G__ S__ H__
phony bourgeois supposed intellectuals, in reality
racist xenophobic swine, and dope ass dumb as
well, may your faces be shoved into the toilet of a
Taipei brothel, I spit on the racist xenophobic swine
of the Taiwanese bourgeoisie

You G__ B__, self-righteous prick from Vancouver, the
two biggest profiteers from the Viet Nam war were
Taiwan and Canada

And you J__ K__ very ugly American five feet tall and
four feet wide from white trash Pennsylvania
somewhat to the right of Redneck, with your
mystical Christian horse shit, may Taiwanese
gangsters rape you in the middle of the Shih Linn
night market and shove five melons up your ass

You Catherine Mackinnon bourgeois feminist with the
really great hair, swallow my cock and lick up both
my balls, and you Andrea Dworkin former
prostitute albeit a damned ugly one, no I do not
have a foreskin, so don't worry

I piss on the both of you, I shit on the both of you, I shove a
dog turd into your mouths, one for each, I
masturbate into your hair, here and now and in all
worlds to come

May these and all such be swept into the sewer drain of history, they are human garbage, they do not even deserve the dust bin, may their names be written in smeared rabbit droppings on the back wall of a chicken coop somewhere in Arkansas

But instead of all these it was you, Shiao-Lann, it was you Shi-Chin, Lili, Mei Linn, Huong-Ling, with your brown hair, your black hair, your hair tinted with henna or dyed blond, even blue contact lenses sometimes in your eyes, it was you in your black dress, in your white dress, in your dress of many colors

It was you with your topaz eyes the color of coffee pouring out, Arabian coffee strongest and most fragrant, Arabian ponies most powerful and most beautiful, with long tails as black as your own black hair, onyx black, obsidian black, your hair so thick and strong and gorgeous, the beauty of your wide mouth your perfect white teeth your lips of shell pink or of coral, wide lips, rosebud lips, lips so silent in the dark room where my face moves toward yours as though through dim water, your eyelids like soft mounds of snow in the moon light, your nose that is a carving of the most precious jade, graceful perfectly smooth and absolutely noble

It was you Shi-Chin, a graceful hollowness to your cheek, your tapered jawline and aristocratic mouth, your narrow delicate lips, a tapered nose; your thick soft pubic hair, how I loved every inch of you, how I am hard for you even as I write these words, remembering you, remembering your fingertips on the back of my neck, your slender arms around my neck, your slim legs wrapped around me, your small breasts pressed into my chest, remembering your

kisses, your crying out into the empty room that you
loved me, and you made complex designs on the
back of my neck with your gripping fingernails,
remembering you

I write this pornography for you, luminous hemorrhage of
night's artery, outside the blinds, luminous blood
splashed on the pages here, black light of
pornography, intoxicated speech and darkened
clarity, radium jewel, I write this pornography for
you, I do not give it to the others I give it to you, it
is a useless gift of gemstones, of black diamonds
glittering in the night of catastrophe

I write this pornography for you, the record of desperation,
despicable images of the despised, in your society it
is you and in my society it is me

I write this pornography for you, the catastrophic
discourses of flesh and blood

I write it all for you Shiao-Lann, Cantonese beauty, with
your wide mouth and a thousand gleaming teeth,
your broad flat nose and your cheekbones from
Genghis Khan, your huge eyes and angular face,
and your deep low voice so curious and amusing, I
write it all for you, for the time when you lay your
head on my chest and your fingers traced idly
through the sand of my forearm, when your
cigarette smoke near the lamp was water at the
bottom of a pail, and you spilled it over me fragrant
and warm like tea with honey in it when you
snapped off the sun and turned upon your side to
kiss me, and I felt the small tadpole that played in
the green pond of my face where your smile
illuminated it and the warm breeze of your breath
fostered its simple joy

I write it all for you To-A with your fair skin, tall woman
like a new sapling, your long straight dark brown
hair, To-A from Hanoi, do you remember when we
lay on our sides embracing, we were two bodies
thrown down, two continents two worlds
overturned, our legs intertwined and our four arms
wrapped around each other, as we tried frantically
to crawl into each other's mouths, the most
passionate kisses of my life, you To-A

And I have heard it said that prostitutes will never kiss their
clients, and yet you did kiss me so intensely and so
long, it was a famishing inside of you that you tried
to fill, it was a famishing inside of me that you also
tried to fill

And one night as I came down into the city on a bus that
was descending through the steep hills just south of
town, in the darkness of the cabin where a small
dark hole dropped a thin tube of light to the
suffocating face of a book's page, my cell phone
rang suddenly, silently, buzzing like a cicada in the
stilled treetop of my jacket, and your voice
blossomed into my ear then, your sun broke through
the plastering of the leaves, for me then

And you said to me 'I kiss me,' you said, and then,
correcting yourself at once you said, 'I kiss you, I
kiss you,' and that was all, and I went later to the
hotel to find you but they told me that you had gone
back to Hanoi, and I never saw you again, and I
knew then that it was your way of saying goodbye
to me, I kiss you, you said, saying good bye to me
forever

I write it all for you Hong-Ling, short and cute and always
acting like a child, even though you were thirty, yet
your day job was in a daycare center and so perhaps

that's why, I write it all for you, your humor and
your sweet good nature, your wide mouth in
laughter your bright eyes, the strange tattoos that
you had everywhere it seemed, one on one shoulder,
one on your back, one across your abdomen, your
high pitched lovely voice speaking mandarin with
such elegance, revealing casually then its special
beauty, its bell like clarity, I remember your voice
so well

I write it for you Ing-Tao, and your name means cherry in
Mandarin, but it was not your name, I never knew
your name, and of all the women I was with you
were the only one who did not want to have
intercourse, at first you wouldn't even take your
clothes off, you would only kiss me, and so you did
on and on, the two of us lying on the bed both fully
clothed, and I remember in the summer when I was
a boy seeing in the afternoons sometimes a
workman climbing up a telephone pole, a heavy belt
wrapped around him and the pole, using both feet
and both hands, climbing upward to the burning
sun, listening to the silent voices rushing there, my
upper and lower teeth held on to your chin like his
cleated boots to the pole, my face was a large glass
pane and you were washing it the bright sun in your
eyes, I bobbed for apples in your silent shout, our
faces only, our two faces ground a silver thread
between them, were two huge buildings connected
by a thin wire, and we both cried out into each
other's speakers over this quite unexpected
emergency

Later you brought me to your tiny apartment, it was in the
winter when the weather was always chill and rainy
and sitting the both of us on your small bed you
reached down into a low drawer and took out a pair

of warm socks and gave them to me, Ing-Tao, your name means cherry, I write it here and now, I will remember you forever

How I remember still Shao Lann, Lili, Shi Chin, Ing Tao,
To-A

How I remember still, your graceful throat, the hollow above your breast bone, the beauty mark on your chest, your soft full arms, your slim legs, your small breasts, your creamy skin, the darkness of your nipples; your wide hips and your slender hips, so beautiful and curved, and when you lay on your side and I let my hand travel the length of your rib cage and down and over your thigh, your gently rounded abdomen

How I remember still, your black hair shiny coarse and thick and strong, hair to grip like a farmer pulling weeds, hair to grip your fingers through like a farmer loading a bale of straw, hair to grip your fingers through like teeth into an apple, hair to grip like raking up a pile of sand, coarse warm sand, hair to grip like sucking on an orange, hair to grip like squeezing warm fragrant bath water from a sponge, hair to grip like a gardener gathering leaves into a pile in autumn, hair to grip like hands around an earthen jar of oil, like hands to grip around a heavy gallon of new wine

How I remember still, kneeling before you I press my face into your hair, kneeling in front of you I press my face into your book's open leaves, I follow the fine script written there, my nose feels the smoothness of the page, I draw the characters up through the straw of your skin, I turn the pages over with my face itself, pushing into the deeper binding, I am searching through the paper's scent, it is not

perfumed, and it is an ancient paper, and it is an
ancient script

And now I separate the sections of an orange with only the
tip of my tongue, there is a sharp squirt of juice and
I swallow the pulp, I swallow the silent crying out, I
swallow the deeper swallowing itself and now I
taste it, silken egg white, tide pool, rained on
branches

I draw the frilled cuff from the wrist, I pull the threads
with my lips and I crowd my hand up inside the
sleeve, the arm inside of you rises up and there is a
hand spread open that can never close, now I set my
face in your palm, I eat the seeds of the sunflower
out of your hand, I will remember you always, my
beauty, my love, my treasure beyond all treasures

It is for you, my open mouth rakes up and down your belly,
above the navel and below, below and then above, a
dark triangle, and the tongue of the serpent no
longer the serpent touches the apex and touches the
base, and then the base of the base, where the fabric
is seamed and the seams of the fabric are stretched,
the cloth is pulled then smoothed down and then
pulled some more, softest fabric then, at one point,
velvet and velour, the watered silk, the complex
moiré

The invisible fabric also, and the frame is covered with
silken cloth, layer upon layer, dense and soft, I undo
her zippers with my lips holding the loose toggle
between them, pulling it downward or upward,
losing it, finding it

The bead of mercury runs quickly between fingers, over
them and around, tickling and elusive, light through
the slats of blinds, a breath on the spread feathers of
a wing, water beads across the feathers' grain

The trees' dark of the forest draws one always farther in,

the throat of the soft needle mat foot path has humid
air, you breathe it in, and the lemon tightens its skin
around itself nearly squeezing out its own juice,
thick skin of the lemon made to be pulled on, made
for the print of her sharp teeth

Push through the blinds that part away from the fir tree's
boughs hanging down, that stroke the sides of your
face, swallow the darkness drinking it like coffee

I swim the dark streams with my mouth wide open, warm
rivers flow over my face and leave their salt crystals
on my chin

And now I see more deeply into the dark, a loaf of bread is
set out on a table, a cup is set beside it, a dish of
grapes is there, a small pile of wheat, the white flour
for bread and the dark flour for bread, there is a
small cup filled with honey, there is a small cruet of
wine, there is a small vase of water, there is a
flower there as well

I then am a diver staring down into them, suspended in the
night water above as I gaze into the well, and then
to draw back, to the surface, mouth opening taking
in the air quickly before the next plunge which yet
is across rather than in

And you think of polished stones and of their smoothness,
of the smooth warm surface of an egg, the surface
of a stove top just barely warm, of the heavy soup
of a still pond in the spring of the year when the
pond weed is blooming, the fruit is suspended in the
green jelly, her womb is a peach slice in the middle
of a molded aspic, the opened melon is pink,
raspberries broken open, strawberries cut, the
pebbly eyelid of the cherry, the tight small
blueberries with little crowns and bracts, the grain
of a sheaf of wheat long and smooth with its central
stem curved slightly and stiff, the feathers around
each grain, the string drawn through the tightening

beads, the coiling together of the bracelet, the sudden snapping and the raining down, the falling pearls, the heavy down pour of the thick clots of the rain

I open my mouth to drink the rain of the entire summer, I open my mouth to drink the rain of the entire spring, and I open my mouth to drink to rain of the entire fall, I open my mouth to drink the bright rains of the autumn, the dark rains of the night, the fragrant rain pool in a palm's depth

I run my lips over the edges of the fields, I break the crust of the house roofs with my teeth, I pass my tongue up and down the tree's bark, up and down the bark of each one, trying not to leave any untouched, I make a mark in the coarse mud around the tree's roots, the mud is sandy and feels like a rough cloth that is soaking wet

I undo all of my clothes finally and the damp air is around me and I move my arms more quickly back and forth in order to feel it better, I stand up as straight as I can and I inhale everything more deeply, I inhale the world and I have taken off my shirt in order to feel the sun, I can feel the air on my back and up and down my sides, the sweat under my arms streams down in small beads, the sun is on my forehead, it is like a heavy rod balanced there that I can never get out from under, I feel the weight, I feel the light, even with my eyes closed I can still feel it, I feel the sun, even with my eyes closed I can touch it, I feel the air even with my skin itself I breathe it, I touch the water, even with the motion of my stroke I can drink it

In the night somewhere in the foreign city, in the night somewhere in the unknown city, in the night somewhere, there is you and there is me

I hold you and touch you, I kiss you over and over an
infinite number of times, how many spears of grass
are there on the hillside, how many canes of
bamboo, how many grains of rice are there in the
field, I give you the world that I know and have
walked through, moved through, seen and heard and
felt, with each kiss I give this all to you, I give you
the world that I am, touching on the world that you
are, here and now, it is impossible for them ever to
flow together, and yet I am yours anyway, now in
the darkness, at other times in the light

How many waves are there in the ocean, how many grains
of dust in the mountain, how many drops of rain in
the plum rains of the spring, how many fibers in the
calligrapher's finest paper, who could ever count
them, how?

In the night somewhere in the foreign city, in the night
somewhere in the unknown city, in the night
somewhere there is you and there is me, I put one
open palm on one side and one open palm on the
other, your rib cage is between, and then I put my
face to your sternum, deep inside there is your
beating heart, deep inside there is your blood of
silver streams, deep inside there is the gold treasure
of your womb, deep inside there is the secret of
your thoughts themselves, what are they saying,
what are you thinking now?

How many thoughts crowd the bloodstream of a moment,
how many candles light its spiral stair, how many
wax droplets drip from the candles' ends, the hosts
of light, you enter and the room is still, you enter
and the space around is waiting, you enter and the
globe is touched the lamplight quakes the dew is
shaken from the leaves, you enter and I am waiting
for you, you enter and I am listening, you enter and

I am placing my hands beneath your steps, you
enter and I am not breathing, you enter and I am
there

I peel the leaves down from where they cover your face, I
open your closed up fan, I make it spread wide and I
make it hold the heavy plums, the heaviest peaches
the heaviest pears, it feels like a branch with heavy
snow at the end, it sweats in the warmth of the snow
underneath, and the perspiration flows down your
ribs

You enter now and I enter in your wake and the warm
water flows around me and wraps itself around the
back of my thighs, around the back of my calves,
the current pulls me steadily and it is hard for me to
stand straight, my lower parts are drawn forward as
though from under me and my weight floats up, I
am almost flying at moments and at moments the
tips of my toes brush the soft sand along the bottom,
and you move ahead drawing me forward with your
arms, turning your back and drawing me forward
with your shoulders arched, drawing me forward
with your curved neck and with your raised chin

In the night somewhere in the foreign city, in the night
somewhere in the unknown city, in the night
somewhere, there is you and there is me

In the dark you are eating your sugar cane, yes it is all
yours, and there too you are eating the end of the
rhubarb, the red flush of it is between your lips, you
are licking the sweet juice that has so much sugar in
it, the infinite rush of the crystals, the diamond
streams

The furred chocolate is melting into a dark puddle over us,
you are smeared with it across your face as though
with mascara and eye liner, I am smeared with it
over my mouth, it must look as though the night
itself has eaten away my face below my eyes, yes

this must be what has happened, here and now,
because of you

Chestnut brown, chocolate, mocha, coffee beans, yellow
crème made of vanilla and egg white, made of sugar
and nutmeg, made of ginger, made of mint, mint tea
I have read is the tea of the Arabian desert, of the
Sahara desert, of Tangiers and of Cairo, of Rabat
and of Mecca, but you are the center for me now,
splinters of street lights through the blinds like fine
compass needles in the darkness infinite in number
indicate only you, unknown continent where I am
voyaging, to which I request entrance waiting at the
farthest gate

And yet green tea, green yellow tea is the tea of the few but
powerful rivers of your homeland, of the mountains,
jade green, parrot green and radiant in light, buzzing
with a million suns, sweating through a million
pores, the jungle, the crowding bamboo thickets of
the south, the green cloud woodlands of the east, the
highlands filled with white mist, the mountain filled
with silence, the pathways of the monks, the
greatest scholars, the poet wanderers, the spirits of
your homeland, the seven spirit hill, the green cloud
temple, the Shao Lin

I give you my silver streams you give me your jade, I give
you mint tea and Arabian coffee, black honey of
Sicily in which the mountain still burns, olive oil
from the presses of Calabria, the light pink coral
drawn up by fishermen, the gold dust of the Tuscan
hills reaching out into the sun, I pour out water from
the Roman aqueducts for you, I pour out silver from
the mines and wrought bracelets made of silver and
the silent arbor's gold coins, I pour out water from
every fountain in each plaza, purest water clear and
always fresh in which the white clouds float in

marbled light veins that shock the traveler's hand,
freezing it back to life
I pour out wine made of white grapes and of black grapes,
fragrant as a fire in a fireplace, clear as honey,
luminous as oil
I pour out yellow wheat and smoky chestnuts, I pour out
bushels of golden leaves, I bring white green
cabbages, jade green lettuce, baize green spearmint
leaves and bundles of dried basil and bushels of
orange and of deep red tomatoes
I bring handfuls of white salt taken from the Tyrrhenian
Sea, I bring smooth pebbles from the tide pools, I
bring green branches broken off of fir trees in the
mountains, yellow dust from a hundred Provencal
roads
I bring the jewel-like colors of Umbria, elegant colors
warm and solid, living, colors as heavy as earth,
colors that feel like polished wood, colors like
brass, colors as dark as blood, colors as still as night
I bring the colors of the Tuscan school, warm colors, soft
colors, colors that are like gracefulness itself, colors
that are felt inside the mind, colors that captivate the
heart, colors that fill with the deepest emotions,
colors that are a nature in themselves, colors that are
a mind and its various thoughts, colors that are the
memory of essences

In the night somewhere in the foreign city in the night
somewhere in the unknown city, in the night
somewhere, there is you and there is me

I draw you up and you draw me up now, I am heavy chains
dragging you down but you lift me, I am a tub of
wet laundry, and yet the water is still warm, you
pick all the grapes from the vine in between fingers

and palm and you yourself are the wine press and
 you yourself are the wine
 I am like moss on the roots of a tree, in the room's green
 moonlight my two hands on your belly are lichen
 across a rock, I am rods of dried hay chopped and
 gathered in a bundle and set down onto its side, as I
 lie here with my arms around your legs
 You are the dust of the wheat, a small pile of it on the
 threshing floor, I leave the print of three fingertips
 in the soft flour, I trace the soft white flour of your
 skin, the valley in between your breasts, the curved
 branches of your ribs, the soft pushing of your
 belly, the streaming waterfall of your hips
 I draw you up and you draw me up now, I am a plumb
 weight hanging down and your five fingers gathered
 in a pine cone are its weightless counterpart, your
 hand is a bird fluttering around my cage, your
 fingers are wings beating against my bars, a hand
 that is neither your hand nor mine loosens the latch
 and gives the door a slight push, you push on my
 secret door with the tips of your five fingers, the
 pine cone's seeds spill upward through the night
 like fire sparks rising and tangling around my body,
 around my dark body
 You pick all the grapes from the vine in between fingers
 and palm, and you yourself are the wine press, you
 press down onto me with your ankles that are like
 tangled roots, their clutch is tight, you are locking
 something down, you are securing your possessions,
 you are counting them with your toes, you press
 down onto me with your knees in the bed's stirrups,
 your thighs are as when two straight fingers hold an
 object between them, How heavy am I for you then?
 And how light am I for you then? our one patch of
 Velcro rips apart and seals back, our two furred

cups fight for the one spoon, my spoon stirs your
 cup and your cup pours its tea out into mine
And now your two thighs push the seat up as you settle
 yourself astride as you float up into the night, the
 inside edge of both feet touch at the ground upon
 your return, you are sitting in a rain puddle there,
 then you squeeze out your sponge and the rain
 flows back, your water flows down over me and I
 open all of my leaves for you like a flower stem,
 your pot draws the flower back into itself, it is
 searching now inside the dark soil for its own seeds,
 it sucks on the seeds one by one turning them
 around on its tongue, it savors the pomegranate
 seeds each separately, it reaches them by a secret
 path without having to break the shell, it reaches
 them by a secret path that grows slowly narrower,
 that shrinks inward as it expands, that fills up more
 and more as it empties, it reaches them by a secret
 path where the pitcher is tipped and spilled, where
 the jar is sealed into its cap and held there, where
 there are pebbled streams of gold, where there are
 closed eyes watching, where there is a listened-to
 shell hearing its own seven seas
I draw you up and you draw me up now, through the
 islands of rushing blood cells, through the deltas of
 the night, through the sun stream capillaries and the
 meshes of the light's eclipse, through the throats of
 sand streamings, through the twinned trees of the
 lightning storms, through the raked beds of embers,
 through the seals that break and close and break,
 through the wax's kiss upon the letter and the
 disclosed light of the pages, through the syllables
 seething blinded, mute, yet hearing, knowing, in
 transport, in torment, through the whispers like the
 rope's stridor in the heavy lading, in the rumors
 foaming of the seas themselves drowned the waves

themselves, aphasic gossip of green leaves in the tree's cupola, frigid tongues of angels in the light crevices through the leaves that are your back, your spine, and I hold it now, I hold and I embrace the cloud tree, the green crown held in my arms, the leaves disappearing in my grasp, the branches sharp against my chest, I embrace you now and the water disappears between my arms, the sand streams out from between my forearms, the wind blows through between my legs, the woolly caterpillar cannot be held with the backs of my fingers, the feather cannot be balanced on my wrist, the shoots cannot be planted using only the teeth, the circle cannot be drawn with a crumb of chalk on the tip of one's nose, my forehead butts into you, my shoulder jars against you nonetheless the warm tea that is your breathing fills my mouth's cup to the brim, nonetheless there are not four winds there are ten finger instead, breezes and eddies through the auburn wheat, ten fingers through your hair, twenty fingers, and an eye is searching in the dark and cannot find what it wants, it closes its lid and opens it wide again staring, searching still

I draw you up now and you draw me up now through the looms that are woven and through the weavings that are looms, through the knots loosened back into the waving grasses, through the passages of light, of water, fire, breath, of breathing, the light of sound and thought, you draw me now through you like pond water dipped through a sieve and you cup the green garment, the yellow grains in your lap, your fingers, and you hold me in your compass now, you draw me, you create me

I see your beauty, I know it, it is here before me in this room, in this light, light of this light, vision of this space, sovereign in these four walls, infinity drawn toward the finite web, drawn and yet not trapped, trapped and yet not known, touched and yet not disturbed, Who are you now, tell me your one name, your real name?

Woman and more than woman, standing there in front of me, tell me the name that you were given your real name, tell me the name and nature of the light that fills you, that you are in the dim enclosure of this moment now, this nakedness disclosing blindness, blindness nakedness, catastrophe of touch, of sunset poured out like lamplight like acid burning off the marks, blemishes, the stains, the ages of the earth, setting light's needle in the glass of the hours, drawing every leaf and stem and the creases of your skin your hair your eyes down into the lamplight that burns you now pouring out its oil

And it is said that light creates the most intense desire, I myself have said this, written it, and so if this is true, is this desire that I feel for you now, as lamplight burns you, as you dissolve into its thousand images?

And is it possible to know what I have known, to touch what I have touched and cannot touch and cannot touch a second time nor even a first time – lamplight pours out its oil on you, burning you, and you smile as I come toward you, you are smiling, apparitional bright space in the dimness of the rented room, your body bathed in the oil of the lamp, your belly your breasts, the emptiness of the light is filled now finally and now I know what I had wanted all along from you: fill up the emptiness of the light for me, touch my eyes and touch my

brow, the words of Pentecostal light that burgeon
there departing from their sources, seeking them,
touch my eyes my brow my hands, the things by
which I know the world itself, so that I might know
it once again, so that I might know you, only you,
lamplight pours its oil on you burning you, my
precious queen, how in the white enigma of my
silences, my hours and days, you've startled
syllables of light and reason in my breast, opening
the clock that counts there, opening the eyes shut in
their casks, pouring them out like oil, and the
lamplight pours out its oil on you, burning you

Your image is a diamond on the black cloth of time, your
image is multiplied in the cells of space, within
there are eyes that see me, gun barrels that kill me,
bees that sting me, your image is a fire in the dark
halls of a mirror, what sovereign walks in those
rooms, what issues are decided there, what secrets
gathered, what laws are made, your image is a
medallion on the night's chest, your image is a hive
of fireflies treading the darkest honey deep in the
field's hollows, your image is a thousand ponds
fascinated by a thousand moons

Around the idol distance is made solid like presentiment,
around the idol there is more than time and less than
time, around the idol there is more than space and
less than space, around the idol the world is silenced
like a field of wheat, history is sealed in its wall,
and this is done for you, here space is transfigured
for you, it is your nimbus merely, time is an archaic
syllable of no account, and we feel now we know
that it is meaningless, how beautiful you are to me,
how I adore you, how with such utter clarity I am
intoxicated, how with such wisdom I am made

insane, how with such joy I am tormented, how
with such vision I am rendered blind

Revelatory instant of the empty space itself, in which you
are so naked, in which you are so clothed,
incomparable moment remembered forgotten, in
which you stand before me exposed, in which you
stand before me covered, moment in which I stand
before you naked and covered, clothed and exposed,
surprise exposes me, your beauty astonishes me, I
can never I shall never speak again after this
moment and if I do it can be only a lie, now and
henceforth speech is no longer mine since you have
taken it, now and henceforth reason is no longer
mine for you possess it, now and henceforth life
itself cannot be mine, for you are it, I am nothing
beside you, I am nothing before you, I am nothing
pressed to your skin

Who are you and what is your true name? But I must tell
you that I am no one

How old are you I wonder – age has many pathways, more
than time itself does, I have learned this now in
looking at you, felt it in your presence, recognized it
there – how mysterious your presence, silent and
unfathomable, I cannot understand how you have
come to be here with me, I cannot understand the
branching paths and the infinite dividing ways that
brought you here to me, that brought me here to you

I can never understand the powers of the world that
somehow made you – who or what has made you,
what or who?

How beautiful you are to me, my treasure, my love, my
child, how wonderful you are to me and how
beautiful it is to be with you, how I adore you, how
beautiful and precious you are, how naked, delicate,

wise and thoughtful, clairvoyant, calm, and so given
to yourself completely

You are yours, you are not mine, and yet you are mine, but
I am yours forever, I give myself to you now – take
the blood out of my veins, I pour it out for you now,
endless libation

How old are you? It cannot be expressed in numbers,
nothing about you can be, nothing about you can be
known, you are the mystery and palpable enigma of
all living form, you are a form and not a body, you
are more than body, body yes, but you are more
than that – ecstatic startled presence of a body to
itself, calm self-presence of a living soul

And now as you step forth from your circle of gold light,
where you seemed almost posed and immobilized, I
wonder not how old you are, but what you are

I wonder what you are, your hair your eyes your nose your
mouth, I wonder what your name and nature are,
your perfect and adequate image in the other world,
your true kind

I wonder what you are, your throat your neck your collar
bones, your shoulders, your upper arms, your
forearms and two hands, your ribs where I can feel
your breathing – now – this moment, fragile,
powerful, mortal, not mortal, destined to live and to
continue to, destined, too, to rise up again from
death

I wonder what you are, as my gaze travels down your belly
to the dark triangle between your legs

There is a moment – and you are an idol seen from across
a revelatory distance in a moment of more than
vision, illuminated by more than light, yet the
distance is small and you are not revealed but
concealed by the light

I look for you, where are you? where is your soul? I look
for you, where are you? where is your destiny, your
fate? I look for you, where are you? where is your
past life, days and months and years, the enigma of
your history, surely there is something sacred and
entirely remote filling the living body that I hold –
how beautiful you are to me, how precious, how I
adore you

Surely there is something essentially unknown, mysterious,
allowing you to live and more than live, filling you
beyond yourself, something essentially unknown
speaking from you, laughing from you, radiating
from you, filling your existence entirely beyond
itself, as music fills a room, as light fills space, as
the sun fills the sky

Surely there is something more than what I see and know
and touch, than what I feel between my two hands
my two arms, than what I feel pressed against my
chest and stomach, pressed against my lips, my face

Surely there is something other, something near but
difficult to grasp

You are held in my arms as a deer is among the leaves, you
are carried in my memory as a deer that is hidden in
the leaves, you are seen and then invisible like a
deer among the leaves

There is another world in which the two of us are one,
there is another world in which the two of us are
two, there is another world in which we swim
through silver fields of hoar frost lace that holds us
as a leaf is held inside the mouth clasped in the
missals of the Pentecostal rains

There is another world in which the hymnbook pages of a
thousand suns sing inside the haystack's belly, like
an eye inside a lamp, like the sea inside a drop of
molten wax in which we follow from island onto

island of bright pollen in the depths of green, where
 there are traces of dim gold which then at moments
 fill the world we thought to have been part of
 There is another world in which a flame is tugging at a
 wick, in which a wick is drawing up a candle, in
 which the candle sheds itself, reveals itself in light
 filling the world we thought to have been part of,
 the room we thought ourselves to be standing in,
 another world pouring in around you, through you,
 sealing up every crevice of the known, making it
 tense and grasping, radiant, bleeding singularity and
 holiness, another light scented with perfume and
 burning wax, another light, and it is our two mouths
 no longer speaking, it is two hands grasping two, it
 is two arms holding two, two bodies never wanting
 to let go
 There is another light in which we are no longer governed
 by our shadows, there is another light in which we
 are no longer darkened with the multiplying voices
 of the strangers, by names by foreign names,
 unaccountable, confusing, wearisome, irrelevant
 names, unaccountable, lacking all mystery,
 resonance, tiring, cast off, put on again, discarded,
 picked up, discarded
 There is another light in which we leave our names behind
 us, there is another light in which we leave
 ourselves, there is another light in which our bodies
 are not these
 Your naked body in the dark room shows dimly white, and
 only now do I think, Who is this really? We have
 nothing in common except life itself
 The ash of your skin blows away, and the coals lie beneath,
 our two forms on the wall, your arms and your legs
 and your legs, and I, a Laocoon in the hydra of
 shadows

Then my breath clouds the glass of your cheek, it blows off
the ash of your skin, and the white coals underneath
burn brighter

I see them so clearly now in your eyes, What are you
looking at, so far into the dark?

Mysterious woman, this is your vacant house and now I
enter it by night, a green lamp in my hand: a match
flares, the palm's shell like a bright conch floating
shelters the light's voice from the clamor of silence

Dark spots of light, circles, and a leopard is moving, space
trembles, shaken with light, and the corners,
too, are faintly illuminated, and I place the lamp on
the floor, the green lamp

Though averse to all fires, the quick, the numerous visitors
flicker back in, fitting themselves through the
light's green splinters, they're like eyelashes, or like
hair line cracks pulled inward toward the green iris

Outside, there is a new summer storm, the typhoon already
starting up, winds searching idly through the trees
like fingers through dark fur, mysterious woman

Occasional visitant, hidden among tree branches I have
gathered the dark leaves from all around, placed
them in a pile, pulled from the fragrant closets, the
geodesic trees they flaked from, stiff, coated with
pale sequins, residual star light, and they are my gift
to you now, I pour them out from my shirt front,
now, and here, I pour them out over the pyre of
empty space and time as it looks up into my gaze,
an open well that widens through the darkness like
the rings of a tree, like spreading smoke rings, and
the open well cries out, it cries out into my silence,
filling it with its echoes, the echoes of other times
and of other places, of other selves

The voices of these are shouted into my ears, the voices of
these are ringing in the darkness like haloed flames,
the voices of these others too are pouring like sand

all around me, running down all around me, like
water off a roof, like lighter fluid over charcoal, like
a shirt drawn past my ears down over my head,
sleeves drawn through my arms, like a stream,
warm, both light and dark, poured through my sleep
with many noises and with littering bird song, and I
awake into the night sky littered with distant suns,
and I awake into myself as a limb wakes up by
being filled with blood, as a branch awakens filled
with sun water, with green sap, and the self that I
awakened to is also littered with star remnants
fallen down from a great height, and yet I pour
these out for you, these sun parched leaves,
light-veined tissue, these living parchment
documents

The lore of the Egyptians gives to me seven selves, auras
within me and around me, seven eyes in the
peacock tail spectrum of my fate, seven cards in the
hand that is held out in the darkness

The lore of the Egyptians gives to me seven cells in the
infinite honeycomb left on the sands flushed in the
iodine of sunset

The lore of the Egyptians gives to me seven powers,
seven candles, small votive lights held on the back
of my outstretched arm as I make my way through
the tunnel of darkness, night tunnel filled with
empty desert winds blown from the edges of the
earth, from long before the kingdoms of sand

I know there are seven small candles held out on the back
of my arm outstretched, dripping their hot wax onto
my skin, tenacious stings of what are no longer
bees, hot wax sealing the gaps, the lacunae of the
written script of my flesh itself before it is read out
aloud into the light, before in the outcry of the light
at daybreak it can shout itself back, somewhere

beyond the sun – O when will it ever be read out
aloud in the light? or must it wait until the final
severing of light itself with the earth, in the
darkness there somewhere beyond the western
lands? – wind-tattered candlelight in the dark tunnel
of passageways – the first candle, the one that is
nearest my heart is called REN, the name that is
secret

I walk through the corridor, the candle cutting out shapes in
the night before me, tossing them every which way,
the walls are concrete, the color of sand, there is no
light but the candle, the corridor is like a well, I
move downward and downward, a bucket lowered
slowly to the starry surface of the sky, the wind out
of nowhere, and the candle flame ripples, tattering,
then gone – hands in the darkness around me,
moving over my body, I feel the fingers on each,
each finger as though quite separately an
intelligence; tall presences standing around in a
circle slowly, quickly narrowing to the space of my
ribs, their pressure against me as I breathe, then
further continuing pressure, their open eye sockets
like octagonal cell holes in an empty hive, their
mouths – but there is only one mouth, directly
opposite as I stare ahead into the twisted knothole
of a tree, a gaping space crying upward in the midst
of the torturous wood grain, flesh straining upward
and screaming from the roots in the dark infinitely
far beneath me and upward into the dark of the
vertical well

Angelic spirits inhabit the desert, and the voices of women
are present as well, yet in their voices there is the
seething of sea foam, bees of light drawing the
needle of honey through the eye of the comb,

an infinite gallery of chambers hidden in the crystal
of a sand grain, and the numerous shades of
darkness fill the octagonal cells of night

Someone is setting a bed of sand and small mica stones
next to the tiny ship I descry at the passageway's far
end, candle light streams on the model of wood with
its paper sails – sea surf of white rose petals flaking
like eczema from the waves of the moon sea, from
the plane of the desert as it grows openly bright
with bluish dawn, yet the walls of stone, of ivory
and concrete are still massed above me, around me,
I drift through the tunnels like a blood cell through
the vessel of an eye, then forms, men of radiance
and casual devastation clothed with the opals of fire
and sunset, spread wide the razors of holy light, icy
and gold, in the sands falling through the waist of
the hourglass, there, where a thousand streaming
serpents climb the spilling apex of gold, the silt of
sun rivers

The first candle, the first of the selves, the one that is
nearest my heart, is called REN, the name that is
secret

And now your beautiful hips are like a waterfall, I have
said this before and I say it now again, I kiss you
over and over, again and yet again, now and
forever, your navel is a cup in which I drink the sun
streams of the island, every bead of water trickling
through the leaves of every hill, and its white blue
empty sky, how beautiful you are to me my love,
how I adore you

Your beautiful hips are like a waterfall, your small silk
purse that is a straw through which I drink the sun
and moon, the day, the night itself

And so at your request I step through soft dust, your moth
wing dust, silken, almost dry, a slight smear of
moisture as though from very small crushed bodies
liquefied

Printing myself through the warm mud, volcanic lava mud,
then with wax candle light droplets – silken scarf
mud – mud for burying your face in, mud for
smearing over your entire face and over your neck,
up and down, mud for the hands and up and down
the arms, mud for breathing in, for drinking,
swallowing, mud for smearing across your chest,
mud for up and down your stomach and mud down
and in between your legs, warm mud there like the
melted candle wax itself, so bright, raining, warm

So I flowed into you like blood into a hand, warm dark
streams and the soft stream bed and grasped you
under the small of your back and lifted upward
inside of you and pulled almost entirely away and
you clutched toward me quickly then and you let
yourself go limp like loose cloth in my grasp and
your legs fell to the sides like the logs in a fireplace
and you held yourself open and steady, revealed,
exposed completely, as the water holds itself out to
the moon, as the field holds itself out to the starlight

I write this pornography for you, therefore, Shi-Chin, Lili,
Mei-ling, Hong-ling, Ing-tao, Shiao-lann, I write
this pornography for you, luminous blood splashed
on the pages here, black light, intoxicated speech

I write this for you, I do not give it to the others, I give it to
you alone, useless gift of gemstones, of black
diamonds, for it was you with your hand on the
back of my head, searching with your fingers
through my hair, you could express so much by
holding my hand so tightly, at just that moment,

Shi-Chin, Lili, Mei-ling, Hong-ling, Shiao-lann,
your dark brown hair reached to the top of your
shoulders, your black hair reached to the curve of
your neck, your blond hair reached all the way
down your back, you with your angular face painted
in with shadows, you with your full round face,
your graceful heart shaped face, your small subtle
smile, your big broad smile, you with your rounded
pretty eyes, with your eyes like a sleepy Siamese
cat, with your amused and almond-like eyes, with
your haunted and deep-set eyes, staring, watching,
thinking

You who would sit on the edge of the bed and shake your
thick hair back over your shoulders as I watched
from behind, and my heart was torn by the beauty
of it, and by the beauty of your back itself, the small
muscles, the string of pearls down your spine, how I
loved you, my beauty, my treasure, how I adored
you

You on whose lips I clung like a droplet of water on a leaf,
and there where I chewed like a caterpillar on dark
leaves, there where I was like a buzzard eating, your
body laid out quite limp, and I pulled the skin and
the flesh, and I tugged at the strips, and drew out the
cord, while you lay there on the white sheet like
darkened snow, your face resting on a pillow and
one shoulder on the bed, and your hand reached
back beneath to grasp my hand, and I knew that you
loved me then, I knew this very clearly then, how I
loved you, my beauty, my treasure, how I loved
you, how I adored you

As I kissed the back of your thighs and then ran my tongue
up and down the back of your leg, first one then the
other, as I kissed your calves, each, and then the
backs of your thighs, harder now, as though to taste
your skin, and then the soft skin of your buttocks

and then your hips, and then I placed my tongue
inside your opening and it was as if I were taking
the phrase "to enter" quite literally then, trying to
enter into you, how I loved you then, my beauty,
my treasure, how I loved you, how I adored you
You Shi-chin, you Hong-ling, Mei-ling, you Shiao-Lann –
of exquisite frustrations muted in your quick,
impatient cries, as you drew me into you, as you
reached back to hold me between your thumb and
forefinger and then, using some beetle legs
hurrying, using the edge of a bird's feather, the
moire edge of a wing, you coaxed the underbelly
and then grasped it all by the root and threw
yourself down on the bed, your face turned to the
side and cried out loudly, you, whose back I kissed,
whose hair I pressed my face into, whose scent I
breathed, you in whom, at last, there was a bird, a
small bird beating and beating with its wings and
straining to be let out and which burst, finally –
exultant – from its cage and flew away as you cried
out after it, and yet it vanished nonetheless, you,
whoever you are, in whom I lay, against whose
back I lay, thinking and yet not thinking, listening
as the world came slowly back, as the magic circle
narrowed, disappeared, and the ring of fire was just
embers then, darkness was in the room, and in the
darkness the red numbers on the clock, on the
bedside stand, or there were red numbers glowing
on the wall, or white numbers on the room's
monitor, you, whoever you are, whose quiet
breathing I listened to, you, who grasped my hand
I touched the side of your face very softly, and you smiled
in a different way and closed your eyes, resting your
cheek against my hand, and I leaned over and this
time you did not pull away but came toward me

Lips, very softly, tentative and then more, and then your
brush tip touched the corner of my mouth, painted
both my lips before disappearing back into the
depths of your kiss

What did I say to you then? I whispered to you then, but
what? and there was a strange threshold crossed
when I said those words, a change somewhere
inside you, and you smiled in a delighted and shy
way

You began searching through me then – a complicated
process, unhurried, breathless, avid and yet very
light, deft, entranced and expectant, searching –
around the very rim of my speaking lips, silently,
and the feeling came forth out of you and you
allowed it to come – so mysterious at first, an
unknown thing, and yet you struggled against me,
pulling me into you, wrapping your arms around,
and you opened your mouth as though you wanted
to shout something into mine, riding your horses
every one of them faster than the last, when was it
that a calm was reached? And yet it was never
reached, ply after ply gone through, leaf after leaf
strewn down, thrown away, and you lay against my
chest as a deeper calm seemed to come over you
and our two mouths were one dark container
holding two silver beads and holding two gold
threads knotted together, my tongue was like my
cock and your lips were like your lips, your tongue
was your vagina, the back of your throat your
cervix, I dare now to say this but I say it only to
you, just softly connected with your full lips that
you made even more full and you meshed your
teeth into mine and we locked ourselves together
like that and you smiled somewhere inside and
softly laughed

Then you began to whisper to me, not even any words but

only sounds, and your tongue was in my ear and it was as though you were speaking a special language of your own and by means of its words you were painting an obscure and precise image, doing this with great delicacy, with an impatient relish, weaving out of these the dark fabric that it was, creating the canvas and painting the picture on it both at once, and there was a calling of your breath, your breath was calling far inside the cavern of my head, far inside the held glass of my ear, *come forward come forward come forward* you were saying, *hurry*, for then you had gotten too far ahead of me, and the darkness you found there was killing you, swirling around you, and so you swirled your beacon all around the dark, describing your messages, far in the depths of the cave, where you had painted your startling archaic fragments of dreams

But then there was time that passed, the ages and the fury subsided, the depths of elemental night subsided, with all of their dreams and endless nocturnal pursuit, and I was mere cloth again, was mere paper, and you dabbed at it precisely, satisfied with it for now, once again in control, and then with a faint giggle of amusement at yourself, put the finishing touches on it, put your brushes away, blew out the light inside me, and closed the door of your studio

And when you close it I am shut out from all of space, excluded from all of time, stripped of all consequence, I am nothing then, I abandon myself now as the crying out of your springtime is a field of bright flowers burgeoning in the night of my mere vision, I abandon myself to you spread out on the waters that you are, I am held inside an ancient hurricane, starlight drifts inside of me and crumbles

Earth horizon, ancient, a mouth sucking the sun nipple, a
wide mouth blowing the sun candle out, a jaw
setting its teeth around the light, iron frame cracked
in four pieces and buried in the sky, rising through
the constellations into space and time, appearing as
green forests, as amber steppes, as meadows
streaming with horses, as fields of barley, rye, and
wheat

Sun tablet dropped into the glass of evening, and then the
effervescence of small stars, earth horizon, no
longer ancient, twisted matchbook of skylines
palely ignited at morning, sun match set down into
the river oil, igniting it, and the barges are small
stones that are living things there

There was a hand in the river, its fingers in the water made
branches ferns bundles of green hay, made orange
trees olive trees green and black and bright lemons,
made tangled jasmine and white honeysuckle green
burdock and ragged goldenrod and the laces of
Queen Anne, made gladiolas hollyhocks streaming
magenta indigo and crimson made golden secretive
walkers through the currents, the shallow and the
deep

And in the river there is a candelabrum of golden hair, a
yellow of plaited light, as gold as wax droplets
sweated down the candle's side, and they are there
too, the shone ones, the light hollows, the fire
embers in the burning glass, like tree limbs sweated
out from the light's storms, droplets of fire
squeezed from the light's rag, the burning drops of
wax, sealing up the eyes in the sands of your
abdomen, pebbles dropped into the still pond of
your chest, ripples of mercury shivering through
your bleeding reflections, and now I know you,
now, it is now that I know you as you are as though

for the first time, Ophelia, only now are you silently
disrobed, only now is this singular action revealed,
space peeled away from space, time washed away
from time, as rain is washed by rain down the
gravestone of a window

Then you rose and put a robe on, your black silk robe, how
wonderful your skin was, yet silk made it even more
wonderful, how maddening my desire for you was,
yes, the absolute torment of your beauty became a
thing of touch, to touch again and yet again

Yet I could never find the image of your softness,
understand it, master it, defeat it -- moth wings, rose
petals or the boa's underside, the softest of all
foreskins, what was the truth of your body? Did I
ever feel it? know it? And what did you desire? My
fingers trailing on your nipples when your bra had
slipped askew, your hair like an autumn leaf
between your legs, your silken wetness, then the tip
of my very tip, the underside with its threadlike
cord, the remnant of a wound, my heart laid bare,
spread eagle in the darkness as the fire poured out
its heat

Our skin was still a cover for the fire, and so we tore it off,
tore it away from what we really were -- yes, it was
we who were the tinder piled in the metal grate, we
the rising figures in the flames, we the blackened
flue, the twisted iron, the heavy heavy stone

The wings of the fire that burst forth beating up after the
logs have caught, the up draft, the ascending braids
of gold and white sparks twisting in a helix
ascending as we stand amid the wake of heat, shiver
of warmth around us then as light beats all its wings
I walked into the fire and then called for you

See it's all quite harmless, come, I said, I motioned you to
enter, extending both my hands

You entered and we moved and shone within each other,
separating from ourselves, becoming four, then
eight, sixteen, uncountable: radiant sound was light,
light and light echoing, petals of flame fell round us

But you are the woman who sells her body, what is it that
you do, you sell your body for an hour, for two, but
you do not sell yourself, and therefore, what are
you?

These are your feet in high heeled open toe shoes, these are
your feet in pointed toe shoes, witch's shoes they
are called, these are your feet in open shoes with
low heels, black or red, these are your feet in
sandals, in plastic sandals with one thong, these are
your two bare feet in the mud in the grass in the
sheaves of bamboo leaves and straw in the yard at
your father's farm, these are your bare feet in a
puddle when you were ten, these are your bare feet
as you walk along the dirt path that leads to the
main road where you will put your sandals on but
for now you carry them in order to make them last
longer and you are on your way to school, these are
your bare feet on the grass that you like to feel
underneath them, these are your bare feet on the
concrete floor of an eating place, the rain pouring
down outside, steam coming up in the gutters and
you slip off your shoes in order to feel the coolness
of the floor and its dusty grit as you eat your bowl
of noodles, these are your feet in new shoes on the
stone steps of a temple, in the crowded market
stopping for a moment, hurrying on the tiles of the
subway underground, these are your two feet in
your new shoes, red shoes black shoes white shoes
walking down the tiled corridor, your high heels
clicking, these are your two bare feet in my hands
here and now, your soft firm toes quite strong, their

grip almost like another hand, the tendons visible
your instep's skin, strong precise bones within,
numerous and fragile like a fish's skeleton,
the peanut shape of your sole, the yellow calluses at
the backs of your heels like some sort of rind, your
big toe a little shorter than the next one over,
thought to be a sign of beauty among the Romans,
these are your two bare feet, how beautiful are thy
feet with shoes, O prince's daughter

These are your ankles, strong joints and tendons like the
thick roots of a tree, like the jointure of a tree root
into the ground, like something made of polished
ivory yet nothing else is like these, these are your
two ankles, most beautiful joined things ever seen,
the work of the most skillful, who could have done
this, who could have made this thing that you are,
you are altogether lovely, my beauty, my treasure,
how I adore you

And now this is one of your knees and this is the other one,
they do not seem to be joints for they are too soft
for that, they are creases inside of the most
expensive silk, crème colored silk, a yellow crème,
a precious fabric that there is no word for, and your
knees are the crease and the joining between two
bolts of it, your skin is the softest wrapping, your
skin is the smoothest paper, far too precious to ever
be written on, your skin is the absolute word of all
words, the total compendium of all meanings, I kiss
down in between your soft pages, I run my hands up
and down your legs, I would do this forever, how
lovely you are, my beauty, my treasure, how I adore
you

And now these are your hips, polished ivory and polished
jade are nothing, most beautiful stones beneath a
water fall, streaming darkness around them, filled

with light, I put my face against your belly, just
below your navel and I open my mouth wide, I want
to feel the fullness there, the flexing soft tightness
like the curve of an egg just taken warm out of the
water cradled in the palm, your two hips are like
two strong handles on the fullest jar, a jar of oil and
of perfume and of wine, and all of these the finest,
how beautiful you are to me, my beauty, my
treasure, how I adore you

And now this is your womb, I can never see it, can never
touch it, only draw close to it at moments, there
within and here without, secret place of gold, of
silver and of jade, gateway to the future and to the
past

And now these are your breasts, your nipples like crinkled
rose petals, the softest cloth buttons, the new buds
of a willow tree, the soft tufts of a willow branch,
these are your breasts, inside of them I can feel the
muscles, how strong your chest is, narrow and full,
the opening between is soft, I can feel your heart
beating, I can hear it beating loudly, I can feel your
breathing, I can feel it sometimes soft and
sometimes deep and powerful

You are the woman who sells her body, what is it that
you do, you sell your body for an hour, for two, but
you do not sell yourself, and therefore, what are
you?

But now I give you my skin, take my hands, take my face –
that I could give you my body, take my arms and
my legs, the rain falling down on me I walk the
alleyways, the narrow streets, crooked figure of
darkness, stray dog of the new world order trying
not to be seen

And then I think of those burned by napalm white

phosphorous and what it is to be that, to be there
and not to be able to get away or to have it change,
no night or sleep makes it different, no getting
better tomorrow, no let up from the pain

Therefore, human beings, do not look to the government of
Washington for help, do not look to it for anything,
it is the garbage of human history, a pile of shit, the
end-time of the world

Therefore human beings do not look to the oligarchy for
help, it is the garbage of human history, there is
only one war, there has only ever been one war and
all the others are side lines, there is only the one
dryness, the one catastrophic drought and all the
ripples of it are the many cracks in the earth

Earth of drought like a tree of thirst drawing its dry roots
inward cracking the earth's soil apart, earth of
drought like a spider of hunger joining its web of
fissures into a vast network of emptiness and a vast
archive of dust, earth of drought like a blind eye,
earth of drought like a closed fist, earth of drought
like a face smashed in

Therefore, human beings, do not look to the oligarchy for
knowledge, it is the garbage of human history, it is
the shit smears on pieces of paper, it is the shit
smears on pieces of cloth, it is the blood stains on
little pieces of tissue, therefore, human beings, do
not look to the oligarchy for information, it is the
garbage of human history, it is lies sliding over each
other like roaches, it is lies sliding through the
public's ear like urine through a catheter, it is lies in
the public's mouth like paint chips in the mouth of a
child

Therefore human beings, do not look to the oligarchy for
beauty, for intelligence, for liveliness, creativity, for
wit, it is imbecility and dullness, boredom, frivolous

decoration, it is the stupidity of all snobbism, it is
the snot in the nose of discretion, it is the goop in
the eye of judgment, it is the yellow wax in the ear
of understanding, it is a total bore

I give you a different source of beauty, I give you a
different source of beauty, more beautiful than
beauty – reality

Looking out from the southern hills at night the city
stretches out its black silk, it has taken off its
covering of rooftops, it has unfastened the pins and
snaps of its plazas of its courtyards and squares, it
has opened up the zippers of its long boulevards and
put aside the red purple amber aquamarine jewels of
its millions of signs, it has slid from its silken cloud
cover, its naked breasts are the hills, its raised up
knees, and it opens its lips of just barely visible sight
lines and the tracings of streets that lie within total
darkness, from the southern hills the woman is
invisible in the darkness and she opens her legs
wide, she slides her fingers in between and she
opens her lips, the pulp of night burgeons invisibly,
the air is warm and moist and there is the scent of
flowers in the air whose names you have never
heard of, the breeze brings it from all unknown
directions, whose quarters you have never visited,
the hills around lead the eye into a night you have
never known, swarming with words you have never
heard spoken, teeming with beauties you have never
before seen

I am there, I am walking through the alleyways, a stupid
grin on my face, running dog of the new world
order, you do not know what I am saying but I do
know, you do not know what I have seen but I do
know, you do not know what I have heard, but I do
know what I have heard, I tell it to you now

I was born in the other world, I did not know where or
when, I did not know who, and yet I lived in it as a
cloth cut to its pattern – who were those people, on
what stage did they move and speak, seeming to
live? and now I look at my hands and I look at my
face, at the patterns of light and shadow, the shapes,
the objects, What does the mirror's skin show me?
and I know that the mirror is itself a stage

I am descended from Waldensian martyrs, those speaking
the language of Langue d'Oc, yet living in the
regions of Calabria – rocks of the Calabrian
seacoast broken by the light into yellow flowers,
naked rocks, cliffs of the Tyrrhenian sea, coast like
a landslide enchanted to stillness above the blue
mirror of the sun, sharp crevices of landscape,
landscape of giant cubes of salt, tin roof landscape
of the sea's reflection, the blue wood grain sea, sea
of wood grain nipples stretching out into the dark
blue water, water as blue as ink, dark surface of
bright water filled with haze, depths of a blue green
mirror in which a thousand furnace doors stand
open, broken crust of light, battered tin pathway full
of razor edges cutting gashes bleeding out bright
flowers from the hand of light, ripping the naked
cheek of the sky, devastated landscape wind
abraded rocks of shattered griddles on which heat
sparkles, where daylight scintillates, where heat
rises in shimmering tatters of rain, denuded
landscape from which the Roman despotism
stripped every tree, broken like small sticks to
fashion wooden boats belted with iron of the pitiless
legions, of the conscripted and enslaved men of
Latium, of Liguria, of Campania, of Calabria
I am descended from Waldensian martyrs, from dark

Calabria with its dry fountains and its olive groves,
scorched fabric stitched with threads of rock and
bare dirt roads, wind seething grasses no longer
there in fields no longer there in fields never there
in forests of dust, stone quarries of the moon tipped
over onto the sea's bright frothing precipice,
furrowed brows of the sun blinded visage with
infinite rows of teeth, the jaws of a snake opening
outward turning inside out to reach into the sky, sea
desert with oases of glare only, salt water as rough
as sand, sea water heavy as lead, dark Calabria, dry
fountains of lunar olive groves traced through by
wind as though through empty pages, thin
parchment face of day, deep vernicles of night

I am descended from Waldensian martyrs, coming from the
gardens of the Piedmont, pursued there by the
Roman despotism of 1655, in atrocities denounced
by the poet John Milton, and they journeying far
south established a small village on the Calabrian
sea coast, where my grandfather was born fleeing
then himself the despotism of the sun, the sun of
poverty, pitiless inquisition, voyaging then into the
Atlantic ocean in steerage sleeping on straw that
had been scattered on the deck, but even so still
speaking the language of that village from which he
came and which was Occitan, medieval Provencal,
the language of the troubadours, of Arnault Daniel,
of the egalitarian mysticism of primitive
Christianity, indiscriminating mysticism of the
book, of devotional poems of ecstatic and elevated
love threaded through with the meander of Arabian
and of Andalusian melodies, mystical revelation
and communion of the Waldensians, of Joachim di
Fiore, of Telesphorus of Cosenza

I write this for you now Shiao-Lann, Mei-Ling, HOUNG

Ling, I give this to you now, I give you the
Calabrian hills themselves and their entire history, I
break the seacoast into pieces for you and I place it
in your hair, let it shine there like the constellations
in the sky at night, I take the oil of the olive groves
and pour it out for you, I pour it over your breasts
and I pour it over your arms and over your legs,
your eyes shine with it, your skin is made a
darkened gold in the lamplight of this room, how
glorious you are, my beauty, you are my treasure of
all treasures

I pour out the sun's overwhelming light, it is in this cup of
tea I hand you, a pencil point at the bottom, or else
you can feel it in the warmth of my skin as I
embrace you, as I wrap you in my arms and in my
legs, the warmth of my chest is like the hill's
shoulder where the sun has been, the warmth of my
two arms is like that of the sub-tropical night itself,
infinite night of Calabria steeped in the Tyrrhenian
sea, rippling night of Naples, night of Tangier and
of Cordoba, night of Taipei

Think of that place now, let your thoughts go now with
mine and think of it in this room now in Taipei, end
city, and we will visit other places and other times
We will share these visits together and become part of each
other that much more, our two minds braiding
together like two streams, and so think of it with
me, imagine

And now it is the early morning and the air is already
warm, the sun is rising behind me, my shadow
flickers out ahead over the salt crystal rocks, the sky
to the north and to the west is full of violet light and
green light, and the sky to the east is red amber

I climb the path that twists around through the rocks, in the

light already strong, the brown sand at my feet
twinkles and sparks
From the hilltop facing the west the Tyrrhenian Sea is an
unmarked expanse of water, the sun makes it green
and turquoise in the shallows, and farther out it is a
steel-blue crust with a sparkling and wrinkled skin
From here Parmenides looked out in the 5th century BC,
meditating the first thought of western philosophy,
that all is Being and all Being is One

The sea has shadow spots, like corpuscles, flowing beneath
the sky's surface; above, there is one sun, a single
point below, there are a hundred suns, submerged
beneath spot lights like furnaces, each one so
bright it cannot be looked at directly

I imagine a snake shedding its blue-green skin endlessly,
the sun is above the hill now, the sky an intense
violet blue, some gulls – flashing white in the sun –
wheel out toward the south

All at once, I notice fishing boats here and there, they had
been there all along, of course

Seventy years ago, one hundred years, these people left
the place where they had been born to journey to the
fabled country far to the west, it was a distance so
far as to be, for some of them perhaps,
unimaginable, and worked there, laboring for the
others, exploited, used, pack animals of the
capitalist masters of war, most never seeing their
homeland again, Who knows what they expected to
find?

Yet now it is Taipei, four way intersection of Chinese
feudalism, of British imperialism, of Taiwanese and
of American fascism, of universal despotism

Standing at the window in my apartment in Jong He, I

looked out on a long road without a sidewalk that stretched in a slow curve like a section of lead pipe dusted over, the color of coarse gray sand and chalk dust mingled with amber red, it reached out to the right where in the far distance was the Taipei skyline with its tall buildings, plum-colored or gray, dull brick red, crème white, against a pale blue sky

It was a road that was being widened by city crews that, like all city crews, left their trucks and yellow bulldozers in place when they went home for the day and on weekends, it went past a large junk yard of abandoned cars, then down along a concrete wall enclosing a high school that looked like a small military base, fenced with wire on top of the wall, a uniformed guard in an enclosed guardhouse at the entrance, farther out were the green and steep hills to the west, here and there little shaded in green spots with a few trees or flowering bushes, in the middle distance were old blocks with house fronts of rough-hewn stone with balconies of black wrought iron hung with bright flowers in planters with streaming creeper vines hanging down, some with small gardens on their roofs, sometimes large enough for tomatoes, beans, and small plots of corn, and often on the road into town, you could see crates of live chickens and pigs being brought in, this after having passed through the suburb of Taoyuan with its rice fields and bamboo groves and small secluded shrines, the bright green countryside running with bright streams of the tropical rains all coming into the city, breaking the city's crust open, filling it with flowers and rooftop gardens

And to the right closer there was a stretch of old storefronts of dark red brick with second and third story apartments above, homes to the lowest sector of the working poor, in one an old pane glass window

cracked half its length on one side in a pattern like rain water branching down and plastered with gray duct tape on the inside, new tape that told you someone was still living there, another street was always being torn up and its steep slope arced past a small restaurant and next door to this was a Buddhist temple made of red stone and with, in the midst of it, a cauldron of ash the size of a laundry tub made of silver with a gold rim and on the back wall of the temple was a panel depicting the Guan Yin Buddha, the goddess of mercy

On certain days in late summer one might see a typhoon blowing up with huge cumuli massing darkly over the city, wind gusting, a smoky whirlpool of gravel spun up in an alleyway against the building's sides with a sound like a chain whipped against a metal box, at ground level a family had set chairs out on the sidewalk, the men sat smoking, the men and women talked as they sat on a low wooden benches and small wooden chairs or stools, some of the men on their heels near the doorway, and passed around small cups of tea and children laughed and screamed and ran around playing, and on past them the road mounted its steep hill with a solid block of buildings in which were a hair cutting place and then first floor apartment then another small temple where a woman swept the walk in front of it every day early in the morning

I attempt to lay hands on the city itself through the barriers of time and place and language, of history, of destiny itself, fate itself, and I walk out to wander in it, as though this could somehow accomplish such a thing, as though it were somehow possible

The road leads up in a slow curve between the two rows of

tenements with their washing hung on lines on the balconies or clipped by means of wooden hangers to the iron grille work looking out on the street, the heat shining street, its sides with a film of amber gray dust, where a young woman walks, a yellow parasol, white flags of laundry flashing in the sun, crowded up against the road the amphitheater of apartments piled up on the road's curve, seven and eight stories high, black wrought iron or green iron grille work, silver railed balconies, the street itself hazy with heat and sun-edged, chevrons of parked motorcycles are crowded in metal-shining serrated rows, the crowded building ugly in themselves but made beautiful by the flowers on the balconies and even by the laundry too and by the light and the glaring heat, the air itself – this bright air in which space and time seethe and burn, burgeoning with unknown possibilities in which the ordinary shimmering apartment blocks mounting the steep cliffs of green hills that in the high summer are buzzing with a thousand suns, taking me forward and backward in time and in space – I am here in Taipei or perhaps it is Italy, the Roman Borgata, Italy, my other place of origin, though this is too in some way – but in what way? – these tenements, this burning bright air, this intense heat, this light-swimming dusty road, these crowded together motorbikes, this crowded city itself

As in a film by Hou Hsiao-Hsien – now late afternoon. the overwhelming sun. bright clouds are moving to the hot and steady breeze. the maple trees and oaks along the boulevard are slightly rippling and disturbed. the light is sharp, intense and clear, a razor flash on windows, steel fittings, car

windshields. now light is genuinely light, shadow is shadow now –

As in a film by Hou Hsiao-Hsien – The clarity of space combining With a brief and yet intense Illumination of the world – as though the widest angle lens were stretching, bending space to make it more than visible, to make it more than real – palpable, ample, fillable, complete, a bright and all-containing realm, seen with a pure illuminated gaze into an ultimate and sacred world –

As in a film by Hou Hsiao-Hsien – the world of sky and clouds, of light and earth, of trees and foliage, of seen and unseen winds, of changing dispositions and the shapes of clouds, of wind shadows over hills and fields, light-transfigured earth, the dark immoveable and pagan earth, Buddhist earth, Taoist earth, Christian earth

As in a film by Hou Hsiao-Hsien – the many, one; the silent, whispering; the world now naked, unforeseen, and burning in its bright external splendor, its irrational darkness – now, now, I see what is before me and as it is

As in a film by Hou Hsiao-Hsien

Yet what is it to know, and what is it to have? I walk along the street, the bright sun hot upon my shoulder, while only blocks away the houses of the poor burn and shine, crowded in the devastated street:

The light that sparks and mirrors from an aluminum-patched roof, the white and peeling paint, the cluttered sagging porch, the bathroom with no door,

the plastic tarpaulin nailed to an old unpainted window frame, still nailed there, flashing dully in the sun, the dirt yards full of broken bikes and disused cars on blocks, the open fire hydrant, the police who come, the children scattering, the open fire hydrant when they leave, its rooster tail of water arcing up above the crowd of thirty children splashing, running, fighting, screaming, laughing – the older one who holds the empty coffee can against the hydrant's open breech and all the other's running through the sunlight and water veil – the foamy water shimmering, as though in sand waves, out along the hot and empty street and running into gutter pools, the silence in the empty street, no children anymore, the water in mud puddles reflecting the bright evening sun, day and then coming night among the poor –

As in a film by Hou Hsiao-Hsien

Only loving is important, this I know now, only knowledge matters, this I also know, the sky is a red cloth scorched by the city night, and crowded in the midst of the city, the soul is banked with coals, the soul, I dare to speak of it

And the river twists like a necklace on a dresser and the world inside of you is a like skein of lights, like the ink streets of the city, neon-ravaged night, the heart inside of you lies beneath faint ash, and I plunge my hands into the bed of coals, I gather them by the handfuls, I break them into diamonds rubies molten steel, coals like raw flesh, their gaping light, their dazzling abrasions rip through the charred fabric, bleeding out invisible blood that tints the dark, I plunge my hands into the fiery beds, and the sparks fly up from a thousand cigarette ends, outside the

night is pitted corroded by the city's acids, the city's face is eaten half away, and above is the huge night, sprinkled with small lights, echoing with the screams of traffic and with mysterious hidden lives, un-regarded, destitute, and I wonder what it is, what could it ever be, this clamoring around me, bright, spectral and accusing, historical catastrophe has severed me like a finger from a hand, intoxicated, burdened with weightless fantasies, confused, worn and fatigued with the burning polluted city, its tawdry elegance, swarming luminous enigma, intoxicated, wary, lost, trying not to be seen, trying to become invisible amid the avalanche of light, the night suns popping on the blinded retina, wandering half lost, and lost completely – running dog, black alley cat of the new world order

Down through the night markets, down past the warehouses and the narrow lanes, the small shrines, small eating places like bright lit garages, the small courts filled with trees and shrubs like a square flower pot open to the moon that slides along the buildings' edges like a coin above a slot, down through the narrow markets, crooked alleys with broken furniture set out, small houses made of brick the size of garden sheds, small tree spots with concrete tables and benches near where convenience stores and old warehouses of dilapidated brick mingle with the fragments of the countryside and where at last there is some partial quiet in the subtropical evening

And people come home now from work riding motor scooters, two or three on one, the men in tea shirts, the women in dresses sitting on the back, in jeans if they are girls, sometimes with no helmets, their hair died dark brown with henna, their hair cut short at the neck, their hair long and down their back

And the people have come home from work standing in the
 concrete cubes of light waiting for their vegetables
 and noodles, small square formica tables with jars
 of chili sauce and clips of pink paper napkins, the
 breeze from the street blowing in, the cold sea surf
 air of the winter months, the hot humid air of the
 summer, the restless typhoon air of the early
 autumn full of electricity, sudden bright gray rain
 showers and steam drifting above the street, the
 asphalt shining like wet plastic
 Bars in the evening, brown air and indigo skies above the
 yellow lighted lime green lighted windows
 advertising red amber ale, dark Holland beer,
 Japanese beer, beer from Tsing Dao
 Customers in the aqua light of the karaoke bars, in the
 green beer bottle dimness of the strip club, in the tea
 dark atmosphere of the massage parlor
 Customers at the wooden outdoor tables of the Vietnamese
 restaurant where the girl is bringing a dish of
 noodles in peanut sauce
 Customers in the brightly lit convenience store buying
 cartons of fresh eggs, buying bottles of yogurt milk,
 buying cans of sweet brown coffee from Indonesia,
 buying soft white Japanese cakes, buying gossip
 magazines, American bourbon, cigarettes
 Customers in hall-like eating places with no front door,
 motorcycles pulled up to the front where faint
 orange light tints the broken up brick pavement,
 inside flattened sides of cardboard boxes on the
 floor, circular griddles as wide around as wine
 barrels cooking *shiao bing*, greasy paper-lined
 baskets with *yo tiao* sticking up
 Devastating beautiful city, moody and rain-swept, your
 rows of barracks-like buildings like burnt sugar
 cubes eaten away in typhoons, city with a banyan
 tree of afternoon rain down over it, city with a

corrugated roof of mist, city with an open roof of
bright green sun – how I love you, Taipei, city of
Chinese faces, nearly fatal city and yet to this day I
love you

It is you I love Chao-Ti, documentary film maker and
political activist, it is you I love Ding Shan, expert
in wing chun gung fu, friendliest man in the entire
world, subtle discerning teacher, it is you I love
Chen I shun, doctor of herbal medicine, even
though you almost killed me, with your betel nut
stained teeth, your cigarette smoke thoughtfully
exhaled, your consultation room lined with carved
and throne-like chairs from the Ching dynasty, it is
you I love Jioa Ing with your huge smile and
flawless English, it is you I love ChihWei, scholar
of literature, it is you I love Chi Yen, student of
psychoanalysis, blind since you were twenty, you
attempt to see with the mind and heart what is
invisible to the eye, it is you I love, Taipei, city of
Chinese faces

Devastating city, beautiful city, moody and rain-swept city,
you that made me know the life that I had never
known, fabulous and miserable city, roach infested
Asian nowhere, how I adore you, how you gave to
me within your green and light burnt hills, as
though in two cupped hands, an entire world, a
history, a destiny, a fate

Fate of an unknown visitor amid the destiny of a people
pushing out the walls around themselves – like
blood inside a bruise – for freedom, dignity, destiny
of a people, those whose car horns, whose talking
laughter shouts and all the echoes of them all
reverberated in the light-slashed caverns, in the
alleyways, in the markets, in the boulevards

Afternoons amid the white washed cubes with flowers on
their rooftops with red painted doors with silver

grates across windows, with concrete walls and dusty concrete floors, with wooden framed screen doors leading onto concrete porches where the wash is hung along bamboo poles, where the green hills around burn in the sun, where the blue sky is white with heat, where down through the alleyway would come the peddler with his small blue flatbed truck piled high with junk, with pieces of plumbing, metal fixtures, hub caps, metal grilles, sheets of corrugated aluminum, calling through a small loudspeaker to the neighborhood

Afternoons amid the flashing traffic on the boulevards, near the apartment complex where an old man in a gray knit shirt and dark pants sits under a tree, liquid tree shadows washing him and washing the bone white concrete sidewalk before the gated building, whose red brick and black windows rise up ten stories, where down the alleyway misted with dust and light three boys are playing, shouting out at the top of their voices into their world

Afternoons when the entire life of the crowded city seemed to well up inside of me like restlessness, like hunger, like thirst, like laughter itself, and I opened the mouth of my heart wide to drink the entire day, the feeling of a city moving in me, almost unknowable and yet knowable, confusing, overwhelming, clamoring with light and movement, vibrating with itself at cross purposes in which I yet could feel in the scattered crowded reality – rich and poor at once, old and new at once – of the huge subtropical city, building inside of me as something not merely mine, nor even mine but rather general and yet so real, imperfectly and yet not dimly recognized, felt and known, a flash of something minute and vast, untraceable, undeniable, the silent movement of the world itself, the force of history

All this was poured into me as a waterfall is poured into a cup, feeding the confused excitement of someone who loves and yet does not know what he loves, of someone who knows and yet does not know who or what but yet still knows, and so I spoke out to you

Afternoons on the Hsi Men Ding, on the Dun Hua South Road, on the Chong Ching North Road, on the Ba De Road, I spoke out to you, on the hills out past Hsindian, on the courtyards of Shi Linn and Yong Chun, in the broad streets of Tien Mu, in the market at Shunglien, in the outskirts of Jong He I spoke out to you

And yet you did not hear me and yet you did not know me and yet you did not see me, even though I was there knowing you, seeing you, hearing you, speaking to you

Now coming back to my apartment filled with that experience that was so new to me, I walk beneath the shade trees near the university and see the mountainsides around marked out with stone tombs that shine in the hot light, and eventually I find myself as though coming out of a dream at the limits of the city once again, on the hills to the southwest looking out onto the crinkled surface of the city itself, where the day is salt cubes of light, where traffic is beads of sweat streaming down the city's face, and there is a restlessness inside of me, a seed that had been dead before, and as I come up around the long curve I see the excavation dug out of the earth along the road side, earth movers left by the crew departed for the day, the bulldozer and shovels left standing, and there is a wooden barrier along one side for pedestrians and on top of it someone has left a red shirt

What kind of disquiet comes into me now in front of this

red shirt left here, what kind of restlessness stirs
inside of me, what sense of tragedy, what feeling of
hope?

In the humid air I am like a sponge soaked in an
atmosphere of twilight, of passion, hope, and fear, a
horror of my own country suffocates me, and I feel
as though with the fingertips of my mind, touching
at them blindly, clumsily, the possibilities for
others, for other people elsewhere, and the destiny
of nations hangs suspended like a bead of water in a
web, like a rain bead at the edge of a leaf, leaf
shaped island of Taiwan, green sponge that soaks
the entire East China Sea, the South China Sea, the
skin burning sun itself and the cloudy maelstrom of
the typhoon with black clouds like carbon with
lightning cutting down through the night, shaving it,
cutting through the world, with rains like
avalanches, with air smelling like peaches afterward
and with diamond nights reflected in the harbors,
leaf-shaped island of Taiwan, green hope of the
people to come, the people still to arrive

I undress in the darkness in a box-like room, the air
conditioner exhaling endlessly, my passions and my
dreams are here in this body that I am, in the dark
room, lying here by myself, trapped inside of me –
how can they ever be expressed, how can they ever
be fulfilled, how can I ever have the life I dream of,
how can I drag myself into the light that I envision,
how can I help another to do the same? – the
incongruous echoes all around me in the darkness,
the impossible reverberates, You who read me, do
you know the meanings of the words I use?

And now a moment of peace is enough to reveal the heart
of an anxiety as clear as the night outside the
window, and so by what routes does the heart come
to its perfect fullness, by what routes even in the

confusions of twilight, even in the ignorance of total darkness, a moment of peace and then in me the war itself is reawakened, the American aggression against the south eastern countries, the war that was for me the war of all wars, the quintessential act of inhumanity, of human baseness, for here could be seen in a fundamental way the total degeneration of a government, of a nation

A private ritual. The movement of the body like a diffused pulse, rhythmic, steady, a gathering of images, as of a word about to occur, or a drop of water hanging at the faucet's lip; the organ of utterance is not merely the tongue, and yet the power of utterance searches outward to gather around an I, a center, the hand, though, is strangely separate, and my legs feel very distant as though only the most tenuous thread of recognition connected them with my fixed and searching gaze, which lapses toward indifference now and then, and now the rhythm of the body is a steadier and louder pulse ascending by way of intervals, each interval an increase of concentration, a slightly higher pitch, and then her sounds, her breathing, her movements, just ever so slightly not my own, not my own by the small interval of absence, as though my body were held, now, by the images in the light fanned out across the ceiling in a scalloped aura tinted by the color of the curtains, where the intent gaze must seek her, and where it yet finds nothing

What are you as you search the rhythms of the passing self, like a piece of music improvised and listened to through a wall, your ear placed to the thin partition of your body which separates you from yourself, as well as from the other, as the moment arrives and night is spoken in its word, as the word is spoken in its breath, as the gathering utterance is found and

then lost, dying in the grasp, melting to a mere
wetness left in one's hand

But now, here, in the glare of morning light already
illuminating the excavated road, white sun already
making warm the earthmover's aluminum skin,
vibrations shake the surface of the earth, fill the air
with noise, Taipei hums and shivers in the steady
earthquake of construction, and the atmosphere
above the busy street sounds the way heat shimmer
looks, the vibrations ripple out through the whole
city, through the whole world like the spider web of
cracks around a bullet hole in plexiglas, like rumors
or like news

Lunch time and walking down the Dun Hua South Road
through the overpass with the metal sculpture of
Don Quixote on his horse, they are tearing up the
street again, dark brown workmen with no shirts a
bare pipe gleams silvery metallic blue like a
horsefly's wings, two guys sit on the truck gate
eating lunch from small white boxes, night club
signs in the midday are like snuffed out candles, the
sun will kill you here, but the men are working
anyway amid a sea spray of white dust in the
furious light of the entire world, they are working
anyway they are working anyway in Taipei, the four
way tie up, Taipei crossroads of space and time,
sluiceway for the four sewers at once of fascism,
capitalism, feudalism, imperialism, crossroads
Taipei, ancient colonial nowhere

Yet in the public square in the evening people gather in
clumps, like momentary flowers whose petals
continually fall, and then the flower disintegrates:
the interests, the conversations diverge, meet, veer
off, branching in all directions; or perhaps the

groups of people are like amoebas, observing each other, growing, dividing in a ragged meiosis, opening to admit new members, new events, which are taken up into the economy of the mass, which yet immediately alters, fragments

At times a perceptible shiver runs through it as people adjust their postures, and the space around each of them is charged and subject, now, suddenly, to hundreds of small alterations as though the interval separating one person from the next were a medium of reception and transmission like a radio receiver, one which could neither be turned up nor be turned down, nor entirely shut off; and the hundreds of indefinable adjustments, acts and deletions, cause the mass to break up into ragged clusters like islands of clouds or mantle on the surface of a pond

The crowds in the square are like a kind of chaotic activity, though slowed down to the pace of ritual, and the anger is attenuated in the silence of backs and shoulders, gestures and glances or their absence

The people move to and fro among the various scattered and visible points, circuits of a kind appearing and disappearing – virtual nodes or centers of interest glimmer here and there: vibrations of communion and then of near disgust, moments of a striking constellation – significant and yet opaque, moments attractive and repellent, comportments of various and of varying powers, moods taken up, things in currency, interpreted, misconstrued, suffered and enjoyed alone, and yet vibrant listening too, and also speaking without listening

At times the slanted light is blinding and yet it is phasing out – becoming more a strange presence, though at the same time it is as though something were going away far up ahead, just out of reach

And now it seems that the sounds of the city come from a
much greater distance and have a foreign and
melancholy feel, though anything that tells of time
and distance brings melancholy with it at twilight,
the time when these are most piercing, most
palpable, as though the eye itself were more open,
receptive, searching, taking into itself a foreign
elements, the dimension of the *afar*, of distance

A strange mood passes through the people spread out
before one in the huge square; it is as though one
had to stand motionless in a narrow spot while vast
areas of longing – light-drenched – opened up
around them on all sides, but it is not merely
longing, it is imagining, envisioning

Life through the centuries, this is what was hinted at last
evening stunned in the brief moment of the crying
out of a distant train, a train that was wailing
disconsolate as though astonished to exist, joined
with another event, another act, private, behind the
line of my eyes, which were perhaps closed

Acts of love, but lost in the confusions of a body, of a self
arisen out of circumstances, out of chance, needing
still to hide, grasping, confused

Life through the centuries, what it has been, for so many, in
the affluent districts of Tien Mu and Yong Chun,
or in the impoverished districts with no name

And who was there to hear it, the cry in the night, lost in
the confusion of the traffic, in the lunar cracks of
alleyways

And I was stroking your face your hair, holding the hand
that you had slipped into mine, life through the
centuries, a hand, a head of hair, a hand that had
slipped as though out of the ruins of the 17th
century, in the vast nightmare of Chinese history, in
the vast nightmare of Asian history, in the vast
nightmare of Western history

Images come to me now, images of the Fall of Saigon – the man dangling from the helicopter runners, the man punched in the face clawing his way onto a cargo plane, Liberation of Saigon, how well we remember: the Saigon women, the tree lined boulevards, wrought iron of the old hotels, French doors with tiny balconies – images come to me now: stone urns along the sidewalks, the markets selling vegetables and fruit, the fragmentation grenade one day, the men with no legs on wheeled boards, the women slim and shapely almost doll-like, wrought iron fences around balconies – images come to me now: a sharp spring wind blowing, white urns with nothing in them, traffic released from its starting gate, the street vibrating, construction noise drowned out, cargo plane over head cannot be heard, its dark green fuselage looks charred in the sunlight bursting through clouds like the geodesic dandelion puff inside an ice cube

The city was being squeezed and kneaded, it was throbbing, ragged crowds were hemorrhaging down the wider boulevards, each person shape waving an invisible ticket holding it up as though to keep it dry. yet on one street, empty now, sudden rains blew through the sides of five palm trees that flashed the bone structure of chicken wings or of dried fish, the trees were like people partially erased by snow sprays from a fire hose, protesting loudly, open mouthed, swallowing some, shoved backward, blowing off like pieces of roofing, a Chinese-made tank set itself across a street entrance like a headstone over an open grave, the sponge city, squeezed and wrung out, dribbles its last blood, ink is being poured into the sky

Images come to mind now: there is the building, bunker
like concrete, three stories, evacuated high school,
broad walkway up the stairs, open at each landing,
The roof. It is night. It is day. Bonfires are lit
somewhere in the sky. Buildings are crying out only
a few blocks north. Sunrise sunset broils in the sky.
yellow light, blood juice clouds.

The helicopter is black then green. Light darkens somehow.
Tachycardia stethoscope air; pummeling air, throat
tightening shadows, suffocating wind wash. Strobe
light blades enforcing crouched abasement.
Scurrying.

Where are you from? I ask, although you have told me
before, but again I ask, Where are you from?

Tell me your name I must have it now, your real name, do
you have one? Tell me your real name, and so in
response you tell me, images move through its
syllables, images within its characters, images in
my mind, can these last themselves be named and
be assessed, images, I feel the rivers of deep green
where shallow and thin boats are floating, the sun
filled labyrinth of the narrow waters, the rain filled
markets, as though in silver point, I see the silent
temples in the early light, I hear the chanting of the
monks in their yellow robes, in their white and gray
robes, I see the small roads outside of town with
their beige white dust, the open markets in the
morning, the streets coursing with bicycles in the
evening

Tell me your name, and when you do, I know that you were
raised in poverty in the country side, the floor in
your family's home of three room was dusty
concrete, you had seven brothers and sisters; your

family grew melons, beans and peas, guava and
sugar cane; pigs roamed around your yard, and in
the fall you burned the peanut plants; walking back
to your farmhouse made of brick from fields
quincunxed with smoldering clumped fires, your
clothes were fragrant with the peanut smoke, your
hands and forearms stained with dirt and grass

Your Chinese hair, thick and absolutely black, a thousand
Arabian ponies could not have the like of it:
luminous and lustrous, like the blackest coffee
poured out endlessly, a swaying curtain to your
shoulders, light gleaming on its surface; it is like a
stream expressing your deep nature: not your mind
and not your body's life, some pure abundance that
you shed around you as you walk into a room or
bend to straighten something, and then come to talk
to me; it is a thing somewhat apart from you, and
yet still you – limitlessly graceful, fragrant in yet
untellable ways, and yet there is no end to what it
tells

The moon spot-lit ocean of midnight, breeze from the
mainland, and some low small waves, a moon half
hidden by cornflower clouds...the air is warm and
smells of sand and salt

You are a silhouette in the blue dark where you stand,
holding out your hand to me yet looking out toward
the eastern sea of China, looking far into the past,
where your family came from

The sea rocks just visible between green waves are ranks of
soldiers, ranks of centuries, changing even as we
look at them

The mainland, centuries old, yet changing, even as we look
toward it, unable to see it, unable, really, to see
anything

Taipei End-city of light: crumbled charcoal of sunset
buildings and the ember glow of last light down low
between. Fire gleams of stop lights.

O the lost roads slipped between the shadow grate of my
fingers as I knelt on the light-tinted pavement.

End-city of lost time sunk beneath gathering clouds of ash.

A single tree rises through the street grating. The yellow
dry leaves shiver in the breeze. Cars full of
adolescents hurtle down darkened streets.

Radiant woman of the rain silk night confused with a lace
of stars, how you mimic all the trceries of dreams,
O my white flower of the neon streets, where has the rebus
of the free market positioned you in, as it were, the
larger scheme?

Luminous hemorrhage of night's artery, outside the blinds

Taipei, end-city of light

Light, space growing dim as in an old daguerreotype, a
certain orange tint opens and renders the light more
active, qualified, and charged.

At some point the light has become a merely translucent
medium, the streaked with gold and crimson, yet it
is called the yellow hour in Chinese, the yellow
hour.

But in the evening the horizon becomes more subtle,
darker, almost palpable, less definite, though still
apparent to the eye.

Light deepens and is a medium no longer merely carrying

our thought but carrying itself as well, the visible
evocation of distance, time, and death.

The eye must now be open in an almost tactile way and
becomes an organ more of feeling and reception
than of projection and design. The world is denser
and yet lightened by the shadows, space grows
vastly distant and yet intimately near. The eye,
responsive to an enigmatic presence now must hear
and feel; the ear, called outward by the eye, must
open to the world, which now is full of an almost
imperceptible activity, silently choiring voices.

The horizon, closer yet more sharply distant, is smaller and
yet grand as with the grandeur of what is seen
against the background of an ending.

The world becomes a kind of living ruin: space and light,
now both intimate, palpable, theatrically expanding,
yet oppressive, thicken it and shatter it, they crowd
it with a thousand spectral forms.

Everything is an echo of something else, hinting of
somewhere else and leading us to that place which,
everywhere, is beckoning. Where? one asks,
Where? and *Nowhere*, *Here*, *Beyond* are the
answers.

On a balcony
whose gold light spills
its amber yellow up
into the wide night sky,
I am waiting for the Angel
of Harmony
and of Essential Solitude
to fall on me,
and I am waiting for the city
like a bed of coals
to grow cooler, the streets less

shimmering with noise,
with heat blur vibrations;
yet neon embers glare
between burning crevices,
and still the sky pours ink
over the long street's wounds.

On a balcony
whose doors let in the night air
from the east
I cannot stop or wait
for what is caught
inside of me to stop.
All must keep on.

A whispering
of wind's sand grains
through the palm leaves
spells the char of thought
where it,
mated with the light,
would only irritate
the eye.
And what is there without
that might somehow be within?—
self after self, strata of a life,
of I, me, my —
of a life alone —
are rubbed away, rubbed off,
until a sort of incense cone
of light
is left, a small thing yet waiting
for a match from far off in the night.

I float
into the night's lake

as constellations rise
beneath the boat
where I must hold
a storm lamp
to a pane of glass.
Stilled water of the heavens,
time-spotted, luminous,
creates a pool above the world
where quick events,
reflected, told, untold,
are glimmered back
into each other
and the letter sealed,
and a moth's eyes
lit with candles
far in the night's skies
shine out to us
within the flame
that melted this wax
into a seal here on my hand,
after burning it.
Yet this was a candle lit
whose flame
was coveted
by the clamorous agitation
of moth wings
that yet would not come near
from where they are,
or rather where they were,
tens of millions of years long past.

I am
like a leaf
upon the tree
of midnight where
it branches from

the moment now,
that single stem
of time,
outward to eternity,
and all its branching leaves
from this point here
to everywhere –
which is the root
of that same stem:
this single tree
of manifold
and bright confusions,
of numberless
and yet not numerous illusions,
questions –
gathering in space,
distributed in time.
I am this single
yet not simple thing
talking to you now,
speaking in this rhyme.
I sound it in the ear
of your mind and heart,
I drop it there
like a pebble
into a still pool,
so that the complications
that I threaten to become
are summed up far inside
that one motive
from which the many hide.
For in this,
I and you –
within a rhyme
that comes forth then,
the single understanding

from the many things,
a single complex meaning
from two words –
there is the single woman
and the single man,
though made of many women
and of many men.

But I know that to survive is all. And so the sky is beautiful
tonight, and empty, a deep blue-violet, a hyacinth-
like blue down toward the east where the end of
light is lingering in yellow and faint green.

The sky is beautiful. I walk out, looking always toward the
depths of it, seeing how they go on so far.

I saw the western clouds how they were ranked in waves,
layered in shoals and in shale-like strata, low sunset
clouds like stepping stones afloat in orange-pink
light

They flowed in low and flat structures as though of
corrugated smoke

In movement then continually the strata flowed and shifted,
and the sun burned welding torch gold and the color
of molten aluminum at the edges

We had only stopped just then to watch, yet the sun was
already low, the air already growing late, not
dimming yet, although already it was quieter, as
though somehow expectant

Where was I then? it was long ago – before I'd left
embarking for the long transformation of my
journey, the deepening succession of burnt yellow
and pea-green hills in the distance to the north, and
we stood here on a hill, one of a series of waves
rippling northward toward the Tug Hill plateau and

then Canada, the green and amber hill, hill after hill,
was like a dark green carpet that one might shake
with a gentle slow unbraiding wave before settling
it in place

Light changes just perceptibly, yet unmistakably, though
here it is Taipei where night fall so quickly,
suddenly, the stark sub-tropical night

Now here in the east the earth turns slowly, and yet so
quickly, time unfolding itself beneath us, its
geological formations shifting, flowing, floating
like the waves of a hidden sea; the earth turns
slowly, yet we do not feel it, although we know it is
turning even as we stand here

We would walk away from it all, from history, for a while
and for a while, turn our back to the overpowering
sunset, but we cannot

How slowly all its changes come and yet how fast, we
think for a moment we both we would like to walk
away, to turn our backs and not and not to watch it
for a while, and yet we cannot

The sunset's light is like a cone whose apex is set
somewhere beyond the distant char of blackened
hills

The cone of light is more than light but is the visible
annunciation of some terrifying process, curious
and unearthly, and yet natural, expected, inevitable

And yet where am I now? and where are we – north or
south or east or west? – but at the beginning of my
journey, I could not know the transformations it
would put me through, and at the beginning of our
journeys here on earth, we could not know the
transformations they would put us through – and
Taipei is of both East and West and of both North
and South

In the public square, now, in this public square, in every
public square, the people are rising, in the east, in
the west, and in the north and south: the male, the
female, the old, the young – the one, the many, the
singular, the collective – they are rising, they are
building, loving, working

In the public squares the people are rising, the people in all
parts of the world are gathering together, they are
gathering their resistance against the forces that
have oppressed them for so long

They are disputing, but it is not destructive, they are
contesting, but it is not destructive, they are
disagreeing, but it is not destructive, they
quarrelling, but it is not destructive

They are building, they are working, they are loving and
building, they are exploring, they are discovering,
they are learning, they are renewing

And yet the new world struggling to arise, the new world
inevitably arising, is a new world that is not the
world of east or of west, but it is of both, a new
world that is not the world of male or of female, but
it is of both, a new world that is not the world of
rich or of poor, but it is for all, a new world that is
not the world of native born or of foreigner, but it is
a world where all are welcome everywhere and
where each is unique and bathed in a special light
that seems to come from far beyond any possible
horizon

Though I give you your money, you give me the world
itself

Now take the blood out of my veins, I must give everything
to you, since my love for you has no limit

It has no end and no beginning, it has no limit

My arms cannot gather you in deeply enough, my hands
cannot hold you, my love for you has no end and no
beginning, it has no limit

Take the blood out of my veins, I pour it out for you now,
in the night, here and now, endless libation

My love for you has no end and no beginning, it has no
limit

You, walking seven times up and down the Zhong Shan
North Road, you with your parasol from Kaoshiung,
your pointed toed shoes, you with the cell phone
that laubahn gave you, and yet you can call only
him, your boss

You with the herbal medicine that your father made for you
just before you left, and a recipe for more written in
bold clear characters on a piece of folded paper
tucked away in a drawer

You, with condoms in your purse, five or six, and the blood
of five hundred emperors in your veins

And yet I still must touch you, with my polluting, my
polluted love

My love for you has no end and no beginning, it has no
limits

And you came to me once needing money, and I went to
the ATM, and took out a thousand American dollars
and gave it to you

In the intoxication of my love, I would have given you
anything

In my dream, you come to me again once more, in my
dream, outside of all space and time, you come to
me and I am waiting for you

In my dream I am waiting speak to you again, in my dream
outside of all time and space, I am waiting to touch
you again, I am waiting to see you again, I am
waiting to know you

ASYLUM POEMS

Voices sort through
the self-pile
convening briefly
in late echoes

Eye and hand and
breathing, watching
the eyes that are
for you against you

These always even
your own eyes closed
swarming of voice-eyes
wind-full leaves

This hand is infused
with a destined
energy it is I
who am this

Unbelievable the
scar of space-time
left gaping I am
not of this cycle

This context this
world I am not
from around here
life screams me

A life screams through
me it is me I this
raging itself out
through my arms legs

My heart is beating
in protest against
struggling with it
bars wings bars

The glass is filled
up to my throat
with the vomit
of nicotine hours

Fragments of past
lives come to me
in the corridor
of space and time

Faces bulge out
from shoulders
from backs from
doors and windows

Voices of confusion
and the pesticide
of memories linger
in my mind's throat

The attendants
are full of secrets
like a straw man
full of field mice

The plague bubonic
was spread by
mice of this world
eating into another

The real humans
must hide inside
their bodies
deeper and deeper

Vaginal shark mouth
of night terrors
twisted upward
like raw winter trees

Abraded abused
landscape face
numbed by chemicals
covered with a sheet

Memory abandons
the sunken ship
yet its tooth marks
are still left

My love has no
limit it extends
out past the walls
that hold me

It tears the metal
door like cardboard
it melts metal bars
like candles

And yet it is
blocked inside of me
like the wood
inside a tree

My love is held
inside my head
like water in
a clogged drain

It cannot flow
down into me
it cannot be felt
inside

It cannot become
part of the
underground
stream that I am

My heart is
an ashtray full
of cigarette butts
twisted burnt

My throat is
dry and twisted
from crying out
in hour glass sands

I swim through
the sand that
itself is drowning
in empty skies

Past and future
are a vice
squeezing my head
like testicles

Sperm of dreams
is crushed
like small grapes
of infinite wine

My heart becomes
like a hammer now
screaming a hammer
that's chipping away

The hours are
dropped into
my ear from
others' faces

The faces stretch
and twist like
smoke and become
like stretched-down ears

Time and the hours
fill in the knot
holes of space
that hum like rain

A sun was
shining in my room
there on the wall
the size of a hand

The room was
shining in the dark
and everything was
a sign of itself

The dark was
tense with a new
voice someone
called me softly

Voices in the trees
build up inside
the light and
come echoing

I walk though
them in the yard
they're like rain
through the leaves

With rain mist rises
from the ground
with these voices I
myself am like mist

Streams of clouds
spill past the
hospital grounds
roofs of the city

Bright deep blue
sky white and
wide ships' wakes
of spray

The world is wide
the day is bright
and clear yes I
would love the day

Sleep opens its
manhole cover
I slip down into
the underground

I almost don't
want to say
where I go oh
it's really terrible

Dreams are the
excrement of the mind
I think unless perhaps
they're its blood

My head is like
a glass of beer
frothing up
in prism dreams

Prism dreams prison
dreams as well
dreams of the prisoners
prisons themselves

One day like
Aphrodite I will
step out of all this
onto the shore

The days of paper
are written on
and thrown away
there are many such

The marks set down
are numerous small
and hard to read
they're very hard

Somewhere inside
there is a real life
somewhere around
there is a real world

This room is a cube
in space and time
and there are
some others like it

Light steps in
like a gown trailed
yet who or what
is the personage?

At night there are
others here quite
different than this light
whispering continually

Sophia, are you
here with me? when
will you, when will we
see each other?

You must
come to me here,
I am waiting and I hold
myself ready

Invisible light,
silent yet perfect
speech, needed
incomparable insight

Luminous clouds
flow over the day
the earth's skin
glows with chill air

Patches of red gold
and orange on hills
domes of the old churches
red brick buildings

Long life has been here
subsisting on
the earth continuing
regardless on and on

Corridor of screams
well at least
shouts such a
noisy crowd

Who can decide
the utterance's
meaning who
tell me who?

The utterance is
a wing on which
the self is flown
bumping against walls

Look out the window
wind washed day
leaves littering and
the earth looks cold

Cloud cover like ash
and the hills are
green slate roofs
light flashes darkly

Lightning of no lightning
day full of events
like eye motes
both bright and dark

The windows are
sealed here barred
I cannot leave,
or not by them

Nor by the doors
heavy doors and
always always locked
large silver keys

Where is the key?
is it large
or small is it
light or dark?

The whole world
is a hospital,
this I have heard
heard many times

Veins of the dark
trees like cracks
through an eggshell
the webbed corridor

The sucking floors
washed with blood
the chemical smell
of the endless day

The wind blows through
the hospital and
the snow falls on
the charts and forms

The wind is cold
through the corridors
I hear it at night
and it sounds so loud

Hallways are crowded,
the rooms used
to be – but now
there is only snow

A cat there was
walking through
the walls, it came
from my dream

All night it was
watching me while
I slept and therefore
I didn't quite sleep

I sometimes wonder
what color it was
though night long I could
see its two green eyes

Death stepped into
the corridor it
walked down
the hallways

It trailed black leaves
and its boots had mud,
there was straw
and a field smell

Death made sounds
like an animal,
death made sounds
not like a man

My brother is
pouring black light
into my mind
like ink in a pen

My sister is
swimming through
the sheets inside
my river bed

My mother is
eating the black
eggshell the street light
cracks out of

The spiders are
making stars
along the ceiling,
arachnid zodiac

Spider eyes are
twinkling in the
fireplace grating
of the room's sky

The moon is gold
and swimming
in the cobalt of
the window's pool

I am standing
I am walking,
and space listens
for my steps

I reach out now
both my hands –
grab the new sun
by its shining throat

Cut me and I
shall bleed, it says,
I shall bleed
all over you

Voices crowd me
they are anonymous
and terrible -- these
are the voices

Now my ear tries
to sort them like
an hour glass sand
or a sifter flour

The freezer door
has been opened
to the chilling mist
of white shivers

I will rise up
with the dawn,
I will step out onto
the living street

Yes I will do it,
the night will fail
in the grip of
these opening hills

I reach out my arms –
I reach out my eyes
to the day, and my legs
reach to the earth

The sun comes up
luminous strong
the sliver of moon
embraces it

Who could bring
together who or what
such different things,
the day the night

Glories in the sky
outside the window –
even as I breathe this air,
even as I watch

My thoughts live
elsewhere in
the roaring day in
the starred night

My thoughts
live elsewhere
in the neon in
light-chipped streets

My thinking is
hidden somewhere
inside my time my
hiding thoughts

Thinking takes place
somewhere, who
can tell me, who
can show it to me?

The soul unfurled
like a flag,
flag pole dendrite,
serotonin wind

Television screen
of the human face,
images so insubstantial
and quite fixed

The long street
twisted into a
tunnel of colored
signs street-lights

Playing cards
of neon deal
the lone pedestrian
a different hand

Crowded synapses
of streets
twist my thoughts
in bright amnesia

Thinking is thought
somewhere somehow
inside a light,
the bulb my brain

My brain is
somewhere around
here anybody
seen it locate it

Cloud chamber
where space/time
crosses where
world-particles flash

The group is full
of thoughts silent
placement of
a foot a hand

Cigarette smoke
cracks the picture
webbing the light
in streams of milk

What is known
and what is unsaid
is held invisible
inside each face

A clear syringe
bee stings my arm
the heavenly eye
squeezes out one drop

Such clear elevation
I rise up through
luminous heights mere
husks left behind

The clouds themselves
are here paving
the sky below me
silent and so bright

Light storms in
the blinds whose
razors slash
through its face

Day ticks through
the silent corridor
the others are
not really here

They are not here
anymore and who
knows where
they have gone

Why is it always
the first word?
light is always, it
is always this

No doubt used
too often no
doubt, and it
cannot go on

Or can it? Tell
me the name
of the world unseen –
it is nothing

Women walk through
the halls coming
out of the light or
out of darkness

A ward full of
men half of them
virgins most of them
homeless once

Light full of
corridors full of
women, each with
so many followers

Sheila Kate or
Jeannie so many
lovers coming and going,
your careless screwing

How can I
present myself
there in your so
crowded court?

I am not a man
of the world,
and yet I am, though
of a different one

Intimate relationships
with so many men
you with so many
voices I

You are the virgin of
certain things perhaps
I of other things,
this is clear

O that I could
make your voice
be one that I hear
so close and hard

Passion infatuation
and commitment I
have committed myself
and others agreed

It was you that
I had in mind,
O my precious queen
of wide-spread legs

A thousand thousand
fruit to touch knocking
so hard against
you I can hear

Semen flows in
your channels stream
within many streams
of so many kinds

If each man each
glans and penis
is different which
of course they are

O how can one
ever compete
the furious and endless
demand of all life

Crystalline beauty
of your skin
filled with streaming
and cancerous fire

I cannot touch
you though outside
this perfect point this
rational injection

I drift somewhere
between synapse
and synapse liberated
and yet trapped

O my queen with
a thousand testicles
banging your crotch
numerous insertions

It is so glorious
your promiscuity,
how I love it and
how I adore you

Your slender calves
pull in one pair
of hips after another
then push them off

Phallic impression
on your cervix
like a brief nudge
or ectopic beat

Spreading the leaves
of your book wide
the rough handle
that you grip

Chlorpromazine
renders me incapable
however and yet it is
the key to my kingdom

Good enough mothering
and how I still
can feel the sting of
the metal coat hanger

No abortion perhaps
and yet still this
tender care I am
favored just think

The red queen so
strident and grand
set her mark upon me
circumcision's razor

Brilliant mood of
assertion and vengeance
as orgasm clutches you
your nameless partner

He has you pinned
on the mattress
spread eagle in the dark
forcing your cries

Sharp fast jabs
open your walls
your dams breaking
his balls slap your waves

Your legs are an
inner tube around
his waist and you
ride his waves

Your arms spread
wide on the sheet
your nipples stretched up,
white under arms

How high your knees
can rise and the
soles of your feet
grip his buttocks

Night of pouring leaves
through the moonlight iris,
pupil of the high
clock's face stares

We are walking
through the hospital
its grass and trees,
the doctors are asleep

When they wake up
they'll be wanting
to give us all injections
and so we must run

The hospital at night
is so quiet
the shouts all
go to sleep too

A partridge walked
into my room
quite small and soft
glowing slightly

Then it slept
all night inside
the palm of my hand
singing silently

Taut threads
of the single
word
the hair line

I am here
I am not you
see me perhaps
and yet not

Thought connection
offered and
broken suffered
beneath a glance

Limited grace blown
through the light
with leaves around
the window's frame

I am waiting
for the time
to clear the day
inside my mind

Light is a bolt
set in the corridor's
lock the day
stuck fast won't move

Took the day
off from school
cut class a six pack
down to the river

Shared a joint
with some
rock weeds hot sun
tingled on shoulder

How quickly
my one life flowed
out from that moment
how quickly

Trauma of light
in the middle
darkness I open
my hands to see

Give me the dust
from the floors
of heaven I am
waiting for all of it

Give me the day
though I exist in
the night tangled
in numerous stars

Eyes come toward me
in the night help
me push them
away with lights

Bring noise and
voices bring
music perhaps even
I don't care something

How I love the
hands the voices
that help me the
faces that see me smile

Even though I am
strange – though I
am so isolated
and locked shut –

Shrunk things
are always peculiar,
it is just
the way they are –

Still I wish I could
be more solid
more normal and
more myself

The day surges
inside the walls
light is trapped
struggling in the blinds

Over and over
the time goes by
filling up the
quite silent cistern

Crowds of shouting
voices with hands
that flash and jeer
all down the corridor

My time does not
live it merely sits
I sit here
in its puddle

Melted wax hours
gray and glaucous
pooled into false
marble gestures

Vibrant boredom
of quarrels insane
loud arguments
echoing through the halls

The night is full
of honey combs
where eyes are
waiting like bees

Walls of the room
are stiff paper
made of gold wax
a hollowed out candle

Bees are moving
inside the walls
their shadows buzzing
waiting for the sun

Strange moods
move through
crowds of idle men
pacing the hall

These strange moods
illuminating a window
with special light, tighten
the throat of conversation

Strange moods bring
the cold angelic voices,
the coarse demonic voices
that stutter and scream

AUTUMN, SEASON OF QUIET

Bright cloud cover
the hills the sky
floats off, off
into the day

Tree tops break
apart in wind
and the air
flashes bright cold

Eyes of black leaves
open in the night,
a candle is burning
behind each one

Fascinating leaves
with light distributed
plus minus points
scintillating

Glowing sky
somewhat more than
blue other than
blue other-bright

The tree is a
dendrite the branching
synapses mind
mind of the sky

Mind soaked in
daylight with
cloud moods shifting
and shadows

Something is
thinking the world
is being slowly
slowly revised

I would run
into the end
of it I can't wait
can't wait to see

Blood flows through
the sunset it is
a hole the world
bleeds out into

Clotting of world
blood around the
crust of earth,
burnt crust now

Feelings of deep
lostness forlorn
and empty space
light-haunted still

I walk under
the deep blue
of autumn sky –
denuded earth

Light strikes
the edge
of earth's face
and the fields

White gold now
the pelt of
the world we
try to hold onto

The branch will
hold the entire
sun the wind
cannot blow it off

The sun is steady
in the sky
my hand
cannot touch it

It touches me
instead it touches
me through
my eye my mind

The wind eats
through the leaves,
it is a ravenous
hungry wind

The rain dissolves
the prints of leaves
the fox's steps
the spider's web

Bring me some handfuls
of black mud
cold water from
the river and wet grass

Black wind and rain
smashes the lamp
down the green
storm lamp set out

Green candle snuffed
by the prickling wave
of the loud storm
the striking spray

Glorious glorious
cold and wet
hammering at windows
trying to come in

This is who I am
you autumn rain
and wind and storms
those are my footprints

These are my eyes
to look straight
into you these
are my grasping hands

My arms my legs
my muddy shoes
with which I walked
the green black field

Waves of rocks
of black cloud
gathering up
and stars opening

The blue sky
nearly black crystal
marked like a pool
with deep light trails

Intoxicated wind
that blows
the night along
intoxicated wind

Soft surface of
the earth my shoes
are wet the rain
the wind the grass

The fields break through
the dark shapes
of the night
filling with stars

See the trees tossing
on the very edge
of the distant hill
I'm going toward

Break down the last
of the old tree
wind storm rain storm
break it down

Smash all the branches
snap them off
litter the last leaves
all over the road

But no matter and
no matter it
cannot really be done –
the tree's still there

Pouring rain into
the eyes of the lake
the lake is
shutting its eyes

Pouring night into
the throats of the wind
and the wind is
opening them wider

Opening wider wider
it is so strongly blowing
branches torn leaves
snapping from the trees

Enormous power
of the storm
that tramples us
into the earth and mud

Enormous power
of the end
that blots us out
annihilates us

Nothing is left –
how wonderful,
how glad I am
nothing will be left

Luminous water
dropping through light
through yellow leaves
and through gold leaves

Cold rain falling
through the branches
and a bright wind
is moving them

Breathe in the air
breathe in the rain
that's in the air,
breathe the cold and light

Green lights fill
up the darkness and
the still water so
drunk with trees

Branches vein the sun
that opens its eyes
inside blond streams
peacock fans of wood grain

Evening leaks out
red light again
from the fray
of the hill's black sleeve

The air is clear
and empty today
the sky is empty
too high and bright

The sun hangs
over the abyss
of the earth and sky,
the sun

The earth is now
clear of everything
but light itself
now in autumn

Pitiless autumn
full of empty light
high bright sun
and shining trees

Men and women
walk underneath
its high piled clouds –
where are they going?

The rivers shine
and the hills lie
bare and open
to our sight

It is autumn now
once again
and the streets
are full of rain

I remember
everything it
seems yes that
ever happened

Bring me the rain
to wash away
these memories for
I don't want them

Grapes hang on
the stiff vines
each a kind of sun
tangled in brown stems

Each one is a blue
and clouded sphere
inside of it though
the cold juice is hard

Frost webs caul
the fence post tops,
morning's bright mist
steams flaring white

BLUES

Well it was early
In the morning
When the blues
Came falling down on me

I was sitting in my room alone
Playing a little now and then
Thinking of the places where I been
And of all the things I done

When the blues comes down on you
Man there's nothing you can say
You got to lie there thinking, praying
Just got to wait for a new day

The only other thing to do
Is pack your bag, get up and go
Hit the long road up ahead
You never know what you don't know

Well who's that walking
On down the road
Well looks like Maggie
But she walks too slow

Get that girl to treat me
Better then
Maybe we be getting somewhere
But I don't know when

Sure looks like
I got the blues on me
Don't know what to do
Might's well climb a tree

You know there's only
Two ways you can go
One is up and the other
I just don't know

All the walking I been doing
In this town
You'd think I'd be getting something for it
But I'm still looking around

Well here comes Maggie now
Well how do you know
Know her by her yellow dress
And her shoes down below

Well here comes Bud Russell
Pistol in his hand
And he comes to drag me
Back to Sugarland

Maggie come up walking
Paper in her hand
Hollering and crying
You got to free my man

And if you go to Dallas
You better steer it right
Got to never gamble
Got to never fight

Bud Russell he will get you
He will drag you down
And before you know it
You are prison bound

But Maggie she be coming
Coming at a run
And she bring my razor now
And she bring my gun

What do you have
When you ain't got no money?
Man you got nothing
And you know it ain't funny

I got this little girl
Want to show her the town
She looked into my pocket
Then looked me up and down

Had this little place
Wanted to call my home
Landlord said I owed him –
Time for me to roam

Don't know what to do
Every place I been
Nothing at all works out for me
Ever since I don't know when

Won't you tell me sugar mama
How is it that you look so fine
I seen you walking, seen you talking
Thinking how to make you mine

Don't know anything about you
Sure as hell am going to try
Sometimes when you look my way
Don't know what and don't know why –

Going to buy me a new suit
Get a new hat and a walking cane
If you still don't pay no mind
No one here be seeing me again

Y ou know there's one thing
That I got to say
Them walking blues come down on me
Just the other day

Now some folks be saying
The walking blues ain't bad
Sure's the worst old feeling
That I ever had

Got to take my bag out now
Got to get it packed
Going be going down that road and
Won't be coming back

Weren't nothing for me anyhow
In this town
Mean old place you know,
Everybody dogged me around

Well I just don't know why
I got the blues so bad
Got them coming down on me
Worst I ever had

Don't know what to say or do
Everything I do is wrong
Yea it's just the same old blue
And lonesome song

Everybody in this town
Been telling me just how to go
Seems like they must all been knowing
More than what I ever know

Some got all the luck there is
Me I don't got none
Don't know how it was or is
Know I got to get me some

One thing I have got to say
Don't like being all so poor
One day's coming Judgment Day
Till then I'm drifting door to door

When first I start to hoeboing
My mother come with me down the yard
When I first start to hoeboing
My mother she done took it hard

She followed me down the yard that day
She was praying, Lord have mercy on my son
Lord have mercy now
Show him the right way

The wind was picking in the trees
Some kind of storm was coming on
Weren't nothing left at all to say
And it was time that I be gone

That's so long ago by now
I hardly can remember it all
I still can see my old dear mother
Standing in the doorway and she look so small

The wind is blowing in the trees
I feel it's time for me to go
Don't know where I'm going to be
Don't know who I'm going to know

They say there's always smiling faces
Waiting just to smile your way
But who knows what they're thinking of
Back of all the stuff they say

The road it's mighty long and dark
But there's no other way to go
Can't never tell what's going to be
It's something you can't never know

Yea the wind is in the trees
The river coming on to flood
I'm feeling like it's time to go
You know I feel it all in my blood

Now I'm rolling and rolling
And I'm long long gone
Well my money's real short
But my legs they're long

She is some kind of woman now
Put me out the door
Don't make no difference anyhow
Won't be back no more

Well it's a hard bad feeling
When you can't stay anywhere
Nobody you can talk to
And what happens they don't care

Whatever she be doing now
Coming all back around one day
May not know just when or how
But it'll happen some old way

But now I'm rolling and rolling
And I'm long long gone
My money won't be lasting
But my legs be lasting long

Corrinna Corrinna
Now let your hair grow long
I be back next summertime
If I don't stay long

Corrinna Corrinna
With your hair so black
Remember how it used to hang
All low down your back

Corinna tell my mamma
I got all these years
Go down to the river for me
Cry out all your tears

Just meet me on the banks
Of the Brazos line
Down the banks of the big Brazos
Where I spend my time

O my rider's coming
He can blow his horn
Yes my rider's coming now
I won't be back for long

Go write my mamma now
Tell her to pray for me
So much time on the river
When will it ever be

And I see my rider
Telling me when she come
Going to bring my razor
Going to bring my gun

Captain don't you worry
I am a long time man
Captain say, don't worry boy
I will drive you down

Well I called my mamma
She couldn't talk to me
Walking with my rider now
When will it ever be

Used to weigh two hundred pounds
Now I'm skin and bone
Someday payday coming
To the hot spring I'm going

Well I asked the captain
Did the payroll come
He said don't be minding
It don't owe you none

Maybe payroll coming
Coming one day soon
If I ain't there for it
Captain know where I'm gone

Twenty-one hammers falling
They're falling all in line
All them hammers ringing now
But none can ring like mine

Hammer ring like silver yes
And it shine like gold
And they're ringing on an on
Let it all be told

Look how Maggie coming
Walking on down the road
Walking just so slow like
She carry a heavy load

Maggie say she love me
I believe it is a lie
She ain't come round to see me
Been since last July

Woman go wherever she go
In the day and in the night
Know that she don't love me none
Never treat me right

Well it was a mean old train
Took my baby away
Now you know she's really gone
She's gone away to stay

Every time I look
Down that lonesome road
I wonder when she's coming back
Won't come back no more

Well now I been on Brazos
Come down 1910
Bud Russell drove pretty women
Just like he drove ugly men

Been a long time now
Down on the Brazos line
Talking up to the captain
Captain doing fine

What you saying captain
What you going to say
But I'm looking for my rider
Going to come one day

Coming in the morning
Don't want to rise no more
Maggie come up walking
Rider come through the door

What you seeing rider
Where you going to go
Don't see nothing coming back
You know and I know

Preacher come to mamma
Mamma say help my son
But Maggie she bring my razor
And Maggie she bring my gun

The blues it is a lonesome feeling
Makes you sing a lonesome song
Every man that got the blues
You know he just can't last that long

The blues jump on him in the morning
Rides him till he go to sleep
Mostly he don't sleep but praying
Trying to get rid of the midnight creeps

Every man that got the blues
You know he just can't last that long
The blues it is a lonesome feeling
And makes you sing a lonesome song

John Lee setting on the rail track
Waiting on the midnight train
When it coming back
And the cold rain

Train coming back
And yet but it don't stop
Boy you gone drag and tote
Just until you drop

John Lee coming round again
John Lee coming round
Captain waiting with his rifle
Waiting with his hound

John Lee setting on the rail tie
And the sun down low
When they going to die
Nobody ever know

But John Lee is waiting
For the train come back
Don't know what and don't know when
Yes the night is black

I can see her walking
Rider come down the line
Calling somebody's name now
I believe it is mine

Maggie coming down the road
Laziest gal I ever see
Slow-walkingest I ever know
But she come for me

What you going to do
When the sun go down
Shining like an angel
Walking into town

Going to take my razor
Going to take my gun
Me and Maggie going
Walking off to the sun

Maggie got her natural eyes
Lord I do want to see
Long way off I can recognize
And she waiting for me

Going down the river
We're Alabama bound
Waiting till the captain
Don't come back around

Sun be setting in the trees
Wind is rocking the clothes line
Don't know where we're going
But that Maggie she be mine

Maggie is a real gal now
And you know she's mine
She's walking and she's coming back
Come rain come shine

Everything that Maggie's got,
Who done give it her?
Looking in the moonlight
You can't see that far

Her hair all hanging down
She's like a willow tree
Walking in the moonshine
And she coming for me

Y ou know I got the blues on me
Yes I will tell you now
Thought about that girl I knew
Don't remember me anyhow

Waiting for the sun go down
Lord I am waiting here so long
Tell you what that girl be doing
Save it for another song

Mamma call, I answer ma'am
Say, boy you got to change your ways –
Said, Mamma well you know I am
--Or you'll have trouble all your days

Yeah the blues come down on me
And the train was going by
Thinking about that one old girl
Hung my head and cried

Didn't want to go to work
Judge he sent me down
Men come to the door one night
Rode me out the town

Sun be rising then it set
Lord have mercy on us all
Sun be ringing on the bars
Captain holler and the whistle call

Working every morning now
Who knows where it gone to end
Man who work on the chain gang
Got lots of partners but no friend

Going to write to Mamma
Tell her to pray for me
Long time on the river
Never will go free

Going to write to Maggie
Tell her I'm still alive
If she want to see me
Bring me a forty-five

Going to write the preacher
Tell him to stay away
But I know my rider's coming
Going to come one day

Lot of women in the world
Lot of money
But you know
I don't have either one

Some think it's sad,
Some think it's funny –
Me, I don't really know
Which one

Yea, you know I been wandering
Through the whole wide world
Don't really know which way to go
Worst thing I ever heard

Lot of money in the world
For me being here all so poor
Don't know what I'm going to do
Don't want to be like this no more

Whisky and women
And I don't know why –
Been walking up and down
And walking through the sky

Whiskey and women
Done messed my mind
And they're running on ahead
Left me way behind

And here I am now
Down on my luck, way down
And you know it's a mean old,
Yeah it's a mean old town

Nothing here at all
But where I been
Nothing here at all
But whiskey and women

Where you get
Your sugar babe?
You got it way down
On your daddy's farm

Come on along
And spend some time
'Cause you know I don't
Mean no harm

I got this little
Country shack,
It ain't much
But you know it's mine

Way far out
In the night so dark
Just you and me dancing,
Dancing and doing fine

Well I'm standing
At the crossroads
Trying to get a ride
Flagged down

Standing here
On the dusty road
The street sign say
Get out of town

Either one will be ok
So long as it is out I go
The sheriff told me that himself
That's how I know

In the dark there is
Two ways to take
There's two trains running
All the time

Wherever she might be
Right now
Her old man he'll be
Crossing the town line

So I'm standing at
The crossroads
Trying to get a ride
Flagged down

Standing here
On the dusty road
The street sign say
Get out of town

Y ou know when something's in you
You know it's got to all come out
You're ready to let it happen
Man you just want to shout

Mamma she don't like it much
Daddy he ain't been around
But you don't care 'cause you ain't there
You're not staying, you are out

And every man he's got know
There ain't no feeling in this world
So just take that one thing that you got
You know you can, you know you're hot

Those neon lights are bright
That is what they always say
You're walking in the cold cold street
But you can sing and you can play

But how to get it all together
Bring it all down to the man –
Sometimes it don't ever seem
A chance in hell you ever can

DESCRIPTIONS

Light fills space
in the room
the way juice
fills an orange

Voices in the street
and wind, the wind
inside the trees
struggling to get free

Powers are leaked
into the moment
drop by drop,
gathering

In a room
I am listening
I am watching,
attempting

Crystal of light
outside
shifts though
the streaming trees

Enormous infinite
light forms
balanced on this paper
near my hand

Dry burning time
the afternoon,
the day is yellow
hot and still

Grass is burlap
colored
on the hill
past the dust road

The sun is
acclaimed
by the trees
that reach up for it

The moon
is a tablet
dropped
in a dark glass

Star effervescence,
bright wafer
dissolving in
a haze of blue light

On what night
will it finally
vanish in
the infinite water?

Night breeze
is oak leaves
and the elderberry's
shadows

Moon puddles
in the room,
surfaces so still
in the wind

It is getting
colder
night by night
and brighter

Leaves on the trees
open their
eyes under
the moon

I am thinking
that each one
of them
can see me

I get up
to lower
the curtain
on night's audience

The tree line
is dark
in the spreading
wake of the sun

Hills lie
exposed
like shore rocks,
streets are bare

Earth is drawn
onward by the sun
moving forward
like a boat

People walk
through light
almost silent,
eyes squinting

In the red,
in the orange
and gold
light abundance

Limitless morning
opening
everywhere
in front of them

Golden light
is tinted already
though
with time

Copper light
slanting
across
building sides

Buildings
have lost their edges
like sugar cubes
in red tea

Where are you
walking
in the morning
in the morning

The day
is hidden
inside the sun,
the day

The sun
is hidden
inside the hill,
the sun

What is the sound
I hear in the
blue sky,
it is not the sky

What is the sound
I can feel
in the moving trees,
it is not the trees

What is the sound
I can know
inside my thought,
it is not my thought

Nine a.m.
and here I am
again again,
at nine a.m.

Newspaper surf
splashes
the building side,
washes back

Puddle of print
on the pavement
stepped around
by morning's shoes

Evening makes
the room lilac
and then rusty
but the window shines

The sky is veiled
with light
that's pulled down
slowly

And then stars
are left,
they are all
that is left

I reveal the world
to you now
in this moment,
light running

I disclose
the voices
of this instant,
light is frozen

I give back
the curvature
of the earth
where light is broken

White curtains
let down their
blond hair,
the light's shower

And outside
the day is huge,
the sounds
vibrating, rumbling

But inside
how so much
smaller and
so much quieter

Breathing as
I walk along
into the sun,
a kind of ledge

Quickening
my pace –
and yet why? –
I step up to it

At some point
somewhere
I will
step through

Stars poured down
like sand into
a well some
drifting in the air

Some fallen
already
far beneath us
somewhere

Points particles
sharp grains
falling through us
everywhere

The moon slips
through the branches
like a knife
through veins

Ragged leaves
are severed,
they are hanging
bandages

The moon
is the pupil
of an eye
stone dead staring

Red leaves fall
to the blue
where the clouds
slide past the sun

Yellow leaves
lie in water
strewn like a garnish
around the light

And green leaves
are a memory
at the very edge
of the sky

Breathe the cold air
so clear and bright,
haze of sun smoke
over the roof tops

Trees are cupolas
of red and gold yellow,
breeze searches through,
disturbing light

How each breath
goes down burning
your chilled throat,
how your face rings

Water drips down
from the apple boughs,
branches are sea snakes
in the depths of sun

Reach me the apple
golden, obscured
on the branched glare
I must touch its skin

Grass is wet from rain,
the cold showers
through the night,
long nights of sleep

In the blue night
I see the fir trees
standing in
their crevasses

Darkness streams
around them
like sea water
through sharks' teeth

Shadows
on the snow
are like the shark's
open gills

Star-eating moon
stalking through
the trees clenches
its jaws on a branch

Biting down hard
it sips the straw
of a twig, sucks
the tree up by its leaves

Tree pulled upward
and upward
like the nerve
from a tooth

Owl moon eye
bleeding its ink
across the sky,
dark clouds blotting it

Owl moon eye
draws the earth darkness
up into the sky
like the sun a sunflower

I have begun,
I have well begun –
down what moon-filled
street to run?

The roots of
the maple tree
black in the night
with rain simmering

Consider the strength
of the tree,
massive as a building,
softly opening

Silently breathing,
multiplying,
here and now a tree
into many trees

Drinking cold water
from the street fountain
in a night
of aerosol rain

I try to blow
out the candle
multiplied in the basin,
its wick melted

You come up
beside me, there are
two eye hollows now
in steel water

The bark of the tree
is a map for
the fingertips, what
routes embossed?

Such a densely
woven text and
its Braille explodes
upward outward

Tracing it, it is
a high tension
power line – a cliff, a bull,
a bright storm coming

Night's music
sings in
the ear of time,
the light stands humming

It stands over
the street,
shower stall of ashes
raining cigarettes

Who is coming
and who is going
past the bank vault
of the man hole cover?

Y ou and I
are walking through
the city
in the morning

In the evening
skies flow out
from the sun,
bleeding time

Black ink
writes it away,
darkness
washes space clear

H igh tree crown
full of cloud shapes
a pleated road
leading upward

I would walk it
if I could
straight up and
into the blue

All the way up
the scratchy
hand holds of bark
into the air and sky

Tree surging
over the house,
a chill wind
building the clouds

Light blinking
under a gray
sky – is it
still day?

A gray green
branch
is torn down
sliding across the driveway

Moon veined
like a fetus' head –
orange moon,
green moon

Tree branches
of cobalt
and wire, root
system of the sky

Mouths of
the lakes and
streams are
drinking it in

I speak into
the night of
the many leaves,
ply after ply

Separate them
with hands
before the face
in the moment

The tree branches
flooding
around me, this
wave of embrace

Surging of space
in the silence
of the star
coral reef

Waters of the night sky
blooming into
bright fathoms,
gems of blackness

Sun depths
so dazzling
that they only
look dark to us

Sun over the roofs
of the town
in autumn,
the high afternoon

The tiles of green
and beige,
the black flashing
around a chimney

The brick of
the chimney
the crème colored lip
the blue air

Light spray
through the
window port hole,
light spray down the wall

I try to
close it off
with my hands but
get it in my eye

I am a moon
with one side
all bright
and one dark

Leaves fall
in the night
filled with stone-
colored moonlight

The fur of
the lynx
of the possum
is stark white

It is like
a dandelion puff
in the moon's
cold breath

The snow fills
the night space
like powder
in a capsule

Morphine snow –
chemical white
of the
dimmed street

Black trees
are scratched
upon isinglass
past a sunken road

White gold field
of sun flakes,
hay is on fire
invisibly

The road edge
is cracked
in fragments –
they are black

Oil slick
of melting tar,
blue sheen
of the road's face

I walk on sticks
and leaves
and the white
grass so cold

Throw the day
into my arms,
I promise
I will catch it

Throw my shadow
in the green ditch
as I walk
into the sun

Rain into the stream,
dashes turned
to dots
on the silver

Blue is chased
and goose bumps
spread through
a chalked slate

Rain increases
with white mist
and space itself
grows crowded

Peach surface
baize with red
and yellow
driven through

Filling it
as with blood,
reddening it
like a flush

Fever of
this peach
that otherwise
is so cool

Gold and green
fish dart
through the field's
invisible sea

The invisible sea
sparkling and
burning and then
cooling like an ember

Dust of grain
of wheat and
of hay, these are
the names they have

Wind is moving
through the
field, breaking it
into many fields

Wind is moving
among the clouds,
gathering them then
sweeping them off

Wind is moving
through the sky,
moving and yet
it cannot be seen

Water is running
down the street's face,
it is braiding chevroned
through the gutter

How clean the air
is how fresh
and how chilly, I
have my sweatshirt on

Three green leaves
and a yellow leaf
slide in clear water
past a piece of gum

Rain falls through
the green bandages,
the veins under
the tree's skin shiver

Cold rain running
down the bones,
but the tree fills its lungs
up with wind

O the torment
and the excitement
of this storm
rushing through the earth

Blue sky is
full of winds
and yet I cannot
see them

Are the winds
full of the sky
as well or
full of something?

What though
would these winds
be full of, what
can it be?

The white blinds
are a grill
for the day
to burn on

The white blinds
are striped
with a basket weave
of shadows

Enormous day,
how little can ever
be done to it,
hold it, touch it

A moon floats
in black rain,
which moon is it,
is it yours or mine?

Cold as white mist
in the autumn morning,
white as a coin
under jelly-like water

Sharp as a coin
in your bleeding palm
as you pick out the asphalt
walking along

Sun cap over
the eye that's
shut in the hill,
the field's ear open

Cap taken off –
the dazzling crown,
clothes pushed aside
for the angel's face

Swarming of birds
and insects now,
whispering bright rain
falling through leaves

Opening sky and
I am standing here,
creeping tide of light
up the beach of stars

What do you say,
beyond the waves
rising widening there
in the sea's throat?

What do you say?
I am looking and
I am listening – now, here –
on the waking shore

See the leaves
freckled with cold,
thread bare frost stitching
forsythia and green

Lying there
in the puddle
or lying in the palm,
how bright the sky is

How great the horizon
and the earth a single leaf,
fire of all space –
still not quite ready

Cold water in
the palm of my hand,
and the sky is
there somewhere

If I let it fall,
the sky then too
is gone as though
in a single drop

So I throw it
toward the sun –
standing on the street,
throw the sky toward the sun

Shadows on the porch
are guitar strings
fretted by the moon,
wind hollows the guitar

Dogs carved of black stone
asleep on the steps
though the stones are awake,
in their dreams they run

A door in the trees
is closing with a sound,
inside the sound
another door is closing

The path has
red dust and brown
mixed together and
I am walking home

Sun chews on
the edge of
trees and gathers
the heat around me

Day is a tunnel
of light leading
away into the clouds
where I'll walk tomorrow

Sun fields braid
with the trees
tying and untying
the green wind knot

The coral reef
of the shrubs is
visited and left
by the wind tides

Footsteps of
the invisible couriers
chip away the faces
of the seen and unseen

O ctober frost,
the air is
full of cold rain
wet grass and trees

In this way
the fields come
into my bedroom,
come into my sleep

I will dream
of the cold skies
shale clouds parting
first touch of snow

B lue clouds
and a green moon
veined with
a beetle's legs

Snow will be
coming to cover
the black tree
and the white

How many horsemen
asleep and yet not
walk through snow drifts,
green dust of the moon?

A jaguar's white skull
smiles in the spider-
web bullet holes
set in the moon's teeth

Sand is through
the needle's eye
the surgeon cut away
right at birth

Wine from these grapes
pressed between your vices
puddles in the moon's eye
full of ruinous light

Walking and walking
where my hands
have walked before,
where my knees touched

Lifting and lifting
through the wave
of dirt the trees
let down on me

Rising, rising now
into white suspicion,
among the storming blood cells –
weightless, free

Loaf of green leaves
cut with a sun knife,
wine of green leaves
drawn through light's straw

The wind's pages
skimmed through in
the tree's green book,
searching for knowledge

Moments hours ages
are dripped into
the honey's glass bead
of evening now

A disc of sun
inside the grass
as I look across the field
to sunset

It is like a red
needle poking through
the brown fabric
here and there

Blue clouds and
the gray sand
dunes, gulls' cries
in the air

Red shore
and the lake foams
green with an orange
light across it

Light is a grill,
the lake is dusty
coals setting with
a fire underneath

I can hear the fire
in the water,
I can hear the simmer
under the waves

I do not write
about the winter,
I like other times
more than that

I do not write
about the dead –
I prefer the living,
I prefer the lived

Grass I have gathered
thick in my hands
from the hot mower and even
its gasoline fumes

Here are some apples
that we picked
the other day,
that afternoon so cold

Grandmother came
with us in her old
green coat like
a scrap of rug

She stood there
near the car
as we picked, and the day
flashed bright on her glasses

Windows go up
step by step
into the blue,
a plum gray stone

Brass colored
gratings with
water shining panes
dipped in by leaves

Who lives up there
you wonder
in that nice little room,
and then what's beyond?

The street's a well
of leaves of all
colors, a leaf pond
with poles rising through

How many days
it rains into
the crowded pond until
drain pipes overflow

Far down in the weeds
are the flashing fish
and a small light,
red or green

Bells ring in the
leaf crown
with rain tapping
my umbrella

Sound of the
wet air so chilly
and the scent of
grass and bark

A moment is
sounding now
to be taken in
right through my pores

Late spring night of
cold rain black mud
of the garden
in my hands

Entrails of the earth
writhing pink in
a plume of light
that sweeps the ground

I gather the underworld
into my jar
where mud caked leaves
are stirring slightly

Wine barrels are
left outside in the yard,
white frost is
bright and smoking

The water inside
is heavy, the sides
resonate silently
when they're tapped

Faces hands shoulders
and suns float through
the blue with some
quite spineless leaves

October afternoon,
how many times
I have written and
spoken of you

Nonetheless again –
and I can't resist
the movement of these trees
streaming upward

This fountain of
limbs and branches
and bright leaves up
into the pouring sun

Stars are the
end points of
geometric figures,
salt crystals of space

Enormous and invisible
crystals pouring down
past the earth
and through the earth

What parts, what
edges of these figures
pass through my thoughts,
become my thoughts?

Dawn sky is plum
colored and orange
and the hills are
red like tea

Small sun hooks
are set into the leaves,
though grass and windows
are not sparkling yet

Rising higher,
the sun will pull
everything right up
out of the night's lake

Morning sun is an orange
falling apart into
flower petals of light
on rivers and buildings

Noon sun is the burning
yoke of the sky,
the shell of space is
cracking wide open

Evening sun is a
smoldering cigarette end
held in the notched lip
of the hill's ash tray

The evening air
is printed over
with faces with hands
and filled with voices

They are small voices,
they are loud
voices as well and
there are so many

And light goes away
tuning the air
to a different chorus,
to unheard of stations

The aquarium lights
of the street are
turned on now with
their copper streaming

Buildings now in
luminous dim water
are still facades where
shadows move across

Longer shadows will
stripe them and leave,
secrets of night's pockets
that open and close

The green drum
of the moon
is silent in
the pine tree

The white drum
of the moon
taps and taps
as I pass through

The blue tambourine
is rattling in the
valley – yes, it is shaking
the small black leaves

There is a woman
walking through sand
toward me from
out of the sun

Open your arms
to gather the
spray of light
under them

Open your eyes
you must see me,
you must see me
where I'm going

Beauty of women,
this one fact
tears at my heart
over and over

However old I get
there is no end –
lightning
through brown hair

Blindness
from a sandal strap –
However old I get
there is no end

The field's hair is
gold in the lamplight,
dim shade of the air,
varnished sun way low

A road leads down
through the valley,
a gray macadam road
that is broken, cracked

Crickets are choiring
persistent and loud,
and the air is chill
near the low roadside

Yellow sun froth
of hay on the bright ridge,
I walk underneath
a high wave of stone

The road's path is cut
through the hills
north of the old town
far into the empty land

Stone strata on either side
of the long highway,
I look down both ways
then up at the sky

Luminous night of
ash fields, waves
of grass with no
foam breakers at all

Trees moving unseen
in the warm wind,
the rain is hissing
even before it falls

Something is coming
through the dense night
toward us, something is
coming and something gone

The morning sky
so high and clear
amazing blue
so filled with light

Bring me the day
in handfuls now,
I climb the rungs
of the crowded street

I am avid, hopeful
pulling the world to me –
men who are my friends
women who are my lovers

Tough rind of the earth,
my teeth cannot dent it,
my fingers can't claw away
the orange's skin

I throw myself into
the air, plummeting
down from the edge
of the sky and sun

I tear aside leaf
and stem and branch,
I tear aside the green
bright rivers and hills

A green leaf falls
onto my shoulder
clings to my shirt a little
as I brush it off

Papery feeling green
soft fabric filled
with a river of sun –
no wonder I can't hold it

I walk into the shade
where a different text
has printed the dirt around
and the bark itself

The stone bench
is cool and damp
in the evening air,
soon the bats will be out

The grass is dark
on the chill ground –
there is sandy soil,
small cones from the ants

The tree's shade is
a cooling seal
in the light's wax,
sun candle burning down

Cat's eyes of night
flash with cracks
of light in the high
and empty room

A star streak falls
and the leaves'
black cloth is polishing
the pavement's window

How windy and askew
the world is set
sideways between
these impossibles

Leaves are a broth
stirred by the wind,
red crimson and orange
things it has put in

Drink the whole sky
from the rippled pool,
there where the morning
has set your name

Leaves flake down
in the essential world
freezing so bright –
breathe it in deeply

Sky moving along
behind the clouds
so still – what draws
your streams so fast?

Cloud rocks are
islands piled high
amid the current,
windy and cold

Give me the bright sun
in between my hands,
so I can dip my face
into the deepest river

Place this leaf
between your lips,
as with the cold shovel
tongues will stick

Wood grain of veins,
sand ribs silted
in the palm of streams,
grained presentiments

Within the leaf
there is another leaf
and within that one
other streams suns lips

Deep cold comes to me
from the crystal night
through hanging fir boughs
and white tiles of snow

Tiered ice cascades
of stream on stream,
chancels encrusted on
the dark green pelt

A tree somewhere
far inside is trying
to rise up through
steep frozen waterfalls

Morning and the sun
opens the house's doors –
night is turned out,
I'm turned out of bed

Special blue of
the early sky with
eyelashes of white
all through it

Robbins' eggs
may crack, we know,
and yet this blue
can never break

So many old songs
repeated and
repeated – rain
and evening light

Cold and morning
wind, even straw
in a cowlick
by the garage side

Even gray moisture
that makes a map
of somewhere
on the wall

Bright floss drifting
over yellow fields
and a road
of chalk dust

A black roof
in the distance
so clearly defined
in liquid heat

A wire fence runs
along the road
and white floss
drifts across it

Tilled fields are
a leopard pelt
tractors have scarred
and raked

The air rings
with the bright
motes of such
heavy possibility

The insubstantial
is driven out
of itself to
become the world

When the wind is
green in the earliest
hour right above
the black roof tops

Right below the
red light, right
between the
streaming branches

Then it is time to
take hold of the world
and wring it in
both your hands

Snow comes down
over the roofs
of the hospital
compound

Over the trees,
the grounds
around, and I am
in this office

Time moving
so slowly I can't hear
it and yet it is
still moving

Autumn leaves
are shreds of
the world that
is being torn up

Blown past in
the wind blown
away in the wind,
littering behind us

The world naked
itself steps forward
now – cold, wet,
the streets shining

Enormous sun
in rings through
the water the air
the horizon's fields

Echoing sun
shouting its light
and heat through
the canyon world

Every point
in the field is
bright now in
the burning air

Red rust stains
of the dawn,
new light is kindled
in the dark notched hills

The golden waves
through the fields
are a bright crust broken
and so burning

I am standing
behind the window,
and the crowds are running
down through the streets

The green rain
eats up the fish
of the tree's branches,
skeletons are showing

They are shivering
in the wind's fingers
that search and search,
touching everywhere

In your cigarette smoke
there are green trees opening,
there are fields of yellow hay
and a burning copper sun

MOODS

Moods are things
that catch me
in a sudden light,
a passing moment

We never know just
where or when they will
and then who knows
when they will again

Shadow leaf and branch
across your forehead
or just a quick
and meaningful glance

Leaves fill up
the trees now
reaching out to
wind sun and sky

And leaves wash
the day's window,
they're wiping it
ever so clean

Now it's so clear
I can see straight
through to the other tree
and the other day

Well I don't know
where all the time
could have gone, it was
gone so quickly too

Yes, it went so
quickly and sometimes
not too bad I would
also have to say

Yet starting up out
of a vacant mood
I can't help but ask
Where is the time, the day?

Never actually quite worked
between me and any
of them, really I
don't know why

Early and such difficult –
traumatic actually –
experience can't help
at all, no not at all

And yet despite everything
I would still like
sometime to try once more,
before I'm out the door

I remember how
it was that day
when it was all
so absolutely right

Light was like bright
bricks of gold straight up
the wall and we could climb
there weightlessly

Imagine stepping up
into another life
entirely free, not like this
dark man hole that we're in

Water flows through
the sky and you
really have to wonder
actually why

Wind blows through
the ground and
you really have to say
it's a bit unsettling

Light flashes in
an eye but here
you see it's like the sea's
mysterious phosphorescence

Everyone has so
many moods,
they crowd through
inside each other

My face seen
in the corner of
the window, branches
fan my brow

Anxious and yet
dreaming awake
something somehow better
I was thinking just now

Is the light something
I can see or is it
something rather
that sees me?

Sometimes it seems
it is like a tune
that I catch onto,
from hearing you

From hearing the
music of your voice,
the meaning of your
thoughts and of my own

What is your voice?
As you begin to
speak, do you know
what you'll say?

Standing in the light
of the ordinary street
on a given and quite
ordinary day –

Yet everything is changed,
not only what you say –
but the mere fact of being
here, now, in this way

It was too bad
about you, that
you were so crazy,
I still hear your voice

Thrown forward
through the tunnel
of space and time –
grasping, listening

How can I ever
find you, reach
to where you are, know
you as back then?

Light prints the wall
with leaves and
branches, wind motions
seen cannot be felt

And the sun's tap is
slowly turned off
till only a thin stream
leaks orange copper

How the shadows
seem so solid then,
almost like living trees,
real buildings, living men

Spring buds where
my face drank
from rain pool ripples
spiked with a tearing sun

Soft pink buds so
delicate that softest
flowers never more so,
and yet in the warm sun

I remember all that
once I touched, all
blossomed inside, spreading
through my hands, my arms

I am waiting
for you all, all
to come back to me
in the morning

Pour all my days
back into my hands,
I will take them now
I will take all of them

Shower the maple seeds,
their wings grasshopper green,
down from spring tree tops
all around me in the morning

Where my blood
is turning inside
my breath, as in
a light bulb a filament

Where my breath
is thinking inside
my eyes, as in a tree
the diamond sun

Where my eyes are
floating inside the sun
as in an orange the
smooth white seeds

Now the fur pools
open in these spot lit
surfaces, such gratitude
from the twinned divers

You are my own
eyes now, reflected
in an urban glass, where
river years have streamed

The second layer
of night worn thin,
but laced up sleep
won't let us in

Sand blows through
the wind's hall
where the light moves
as though in ochre shrouds

Mica blooms now –
a desert of rock chips,
yellow sand the paraffin road
cracked craters of chalk

A flat road and low
washed over washed out
by the high sand tide –
wooden poles mark distance

Darkened sister sun
and you lordly moon
in the discovered night,
undrape your wide seas!

Undrape yourselves to me,
bring water to my hands
for my bright salt tears –
I have come from far

I have tread down years –
Darkened sister sun
and you lordly moon,
in the discovered night

Morning sun bores
a hole in the darkness,
wood grain breaking open
in dim green trees

Varnish of faint light
and summer stillness,
humid air and the field's scent
as heavy as drying paint

Stand in the weed ditch,
tentative tall mullein
swayed in the light breeze,
and grass at my pant leg

Thinking through these
latest questionings,
the lamp by the bed
streams a million suns

Dust particles of light
seeded in the mind
that wonders doubts
feeling itself blind

Feeling itself turned
into its opposite,
the involuted body
thinking through its darkness

Night is a broth
of wind and rain,
branches stirred in
by flaking trees

Vortex clouds cut through
by the rain's sieve,
sounds of the boiling earth
cracking open to its roots

Scent of ozone now,
no clouds but open sky
-- fine salt crystals,
brine lace work of stars

Beauty passing by
here everywhere
lovely such gold
and sunlit hair

The streets so full
of youth and grace
faces glances clothes on
slim and elegant forms

Beauty lives for
others now, for me
what can there be
beyond this mere watching?

Early in the morning
and I am here
opening the lost
yet found passages –

This wandering
of the inner ear
of mind and even
of time itself –

Thought intention breath –
onward the reasoned
discovery toward that last rhyme
I will not write here

Open the veins
of light like
two slit wrists – and
now how it bleeds

Straight into my eyes –
the bright sun artery!
Light fills the day
as blood our veins

Lying with my face
to the sun breast,
its warmth pressing down
as I soak it in

Sitting in this
coffee place – cool air
a red tile floor
a thick white cup

Listening to the stray
conversations around,
yet never look up –
just thinking instead

Thinking instead
of a single word –
will it ever be said
again, said to me?

Dim light fanned
across your bare
chest from the
lime green blinds

And I trace the
tan lines around
your two breasts
with my finger tips

Listening there so
close to that hidden
place, so near and far,
wondering what you are

So many moods
that go through
the mind, each
a new landscape

Drawn across
as though in
each and any wind
(as the leaves toss)

Sun above high
in the sky straight
straight up, on the ground
my feet with no shadow

The days so
real and unreal
both – such an odd
dream experience

Pull all the threads
of hours far
into yourself, the spool
wound up so tight

Then when it's cut
and all's unwound –
then such release,
then such a loss

The other voice
I've heard
speaking so often
at the edge of words

The other voice
faint and elusive
yet present somehow
in the coals of light

A voice in which
a true unknown,
the burnt out time,
can be made clear

My eye searches
the off white
ceiling, no fan yet
blades of late light, still

What can be done
with this constant
thing, steadily there,
whether seen, unseen –

Steadily thought
even when unthought,
just outside the window
flickering in the green?

Snow in the light
of early spring,
a March blizzard's
white day, wet night

Pebbly blue black
shine on the street
beneath the chalky
blue of a street light

Cold, and it will be
winter until it's
summer – waiting still
for the deep renewal

Searching through time,
memory encumbers
the days and my
dreams at night

Bad memories the
mind can only wince
from, must flinch
away from, mind wounds

Mind scars and one
in particular
left on my body, seen
every day, each night

Renewal of the
season, light has
a new watery sharp
look and feel

Light of spring
and a cold wind
announced in the bare
black branches –

Pushing the white
cirrus clouds high
overhead through the bright
pale cold blue sky

An orange, ripe
and filled with
juice – a sun
and humid groves

Warm air and
rain's silver nets
let down in showers
or in fragrant mists

White straw hats
flashing in sun,
hands on wooden
ladders, on slatted bushels

The rain pouring
water out from
the gutters, from
the tar black roofs

The city under
a white mist filled
with slanted rain
on wax gray windows

Cold rain, cold wet
air in every cellar
or small alleyway,
every building corridor

Pour all the
tears out now
from my heart,
they will never end

Rain can come
on and on –
let the rain come on
however it will

Loneliness bleeds
like an ulcer
inside of me,
now and always

Who are you
reading these few
brief lines – where?
I think of you

Reaching far out
to the other,
the unknown life
on the opposite side

The unknown mind
I almost glimpse,
hidden absolutely though –
the unknown suffering

Let my tears
rain down, let them
be like water
running down a tree

Let the sorrow
inside of me be
the tossing of its
branches in the wind

Let the loneliness
and pain be
the cold black earth
that its roots are in

Your ears are
the gifts of light,
your eyes are
the gifts of sound

Your breathing is
the gifts of touch,
many and many –
acts of creation

Echoing around,
spinning outward
in each moment, this
vertigo of a cosmos

Lying in a narrow
bed alone at night
waiting for sleep,
waiting for day –

And renewal of this
cubicle I'm in,
as though washed clean
in the early light

Working through this
dark opposing time,
like hauling a boat
upstream across the rocks

Thinking of you
again as I so
often do, can't seem
to stop at all

And it would be
so wonderful
to see you once
again I think

Wonderful to have
you near me,
wonderful your eyes
your strange smile, your face

So strange to think
so little time
left to my life –
where did it go?

It all seems
so recent and yet
also somehow
dim and remote

Something I had
wandered into
as though by mistake,
and yet must redo

Now evening
fills the room
with a grey green
and subtle light

Evenings have
returned, since
it is April now,
the spring's opening

And the world
grows slowly
slowly larger as
winter shrinks away

There is an opening –
my whole being
is searching through
its blank walls

I am searching
for the narrow
crevice, the one
single key hole

I must have, must
find, to thread
my old life through
into the new beyond

Where are you?
I am looking, I
am searching, and
even remembering

Did I find you once?
Did I know you
there and then? – where
was it though? when?

When was the time, where
the place? in what day
with its sun, wind blown
street with its night?

How to gain, and
then when once had
keep for good
and all, the simple

Single and precious
precarious jewel,
the centerpiece
of the soul

Insight, wisdom —
and then the basis
of these, which
is self-control

Gratitude for my
language and for
thought itself, quick ideas
teeming in the mind

Beatitude I too
would call this
sheer possession
of the living soul

I too would be
possessed by this
inwardly multiplying
divinity, now, always

Girls in slim dresses
white dresses or
green and red,
walking in the sun

And I am watching
as though with
a newly clarified
and abstract intention

Is it possible to see
the beauty that is there
inside that dress? – clear,
living, whole, and luminous

Is it you I want to touch?
And if it is, how shall
it be done? – at what point
step beyond a bound

At what point violate
the inner separation
that I now must feel –
desire and oneself,

Desire and the soul –
which now with
these increasing years
has found itself inviolable

Teachers of old,
I feel you around me
as I write, a choir of voices
in the room's light

Not the great poets
of the past, it is not
they, but rather
my mere professors

Those I knew myself –
Conlon and Colville
Londravage, Law – I think
of you now, I think of you all

Love is passed on
from hand to hand,
likewise from mouth,
eyes, lips, and faces –

But it is passed too
from mind to mind,
idea to idea – a linking
abstract mesh of souls

Burning in daylight
there outside the window –
living created structures
of the rushing city

Thoughts of early
youth and childhood
gather in me
day by day

So that I seem
to see a given
life as a simple
and a single thing

Revelation of
a living soul
unfolding, yet timeless,
in a living light

The day grows
up around us
in the morning light,
just beyond

Day beyond day,
sky beyond sky
that had been dark,
although with stars

What is beyond
the day we see,
what beyond
the sky, the night?

Afternoon in April
and the light goes
gray, the air quite cool,
lightning tremors spark

Then cold rain like
ice flecks on the pane,
and I get up to drag
the curtains back

Winter is over now,
spring is coming in
with hail and bright rain
and a sky of steamy clouds

Old friend from our
days on Brown Street,
do you remember
our evening walks?

In the age of
meeting ourselves
again, we too
will meet again

Images of memory
fill the mind –
in the epochs of loneliness
our sure companions

Afternoons of loneliness,
as the slanting light
fills the corridors
of the quiet town

Here the public square
is empty except
for the late sitters,
dreaming through smoke

Clouds pass high
overhead, it is
a long way up, the sky
so intensely blue

You were the most
beautiful, the most
passionate, most
inward and exquisite

You were an
incomparable
experience, and I
can never forget

How I would
love to see you,
how I would love
to know you again

Y ou, satanist rabble
of the Catholic Church,
child abusing scum,
scum of the earth

You rabbis cutting
the infant, and then
you suck the blood,
in this way as well

You jihadis, you
the delusional
armies of Allah,
you too are human trash

L ight of the world
that streams though
all things, lies behind them
yet within them

Radiance beyond all
merely seen, and yet
also definitely seen
in what is beautiful

Luminous event of
sheer existence
in itself, set within
some greater, greatest light

Darkness of the world
radiant and clean,
violence of ideas –
precision of violence

This clarity penetrates
all realms, planes
of existence, dimensions
of these minds, all minds

Concepts storm in
the streams of light,
anti-concepts too fill
the radiant pool of night

Evening comes
in April with its
faint light tinted
as with copper

What is it I felt
in the quiet of
the back yard,
under the plum trees?

Beside the white
almond blossoms,
near red roses –
what was passing?

Maple tree high
near the house
dropping its
showers of seeds

Casting its skeins
of light and rain,
spreading broad skirts
of gusting wind

Opening its broad
green hand so
spotched with sunlight
and with shadow

Unknown entities
that fill the slant light
of the oak tree's
dim rippling pond

Catching at black
leaves as though
for cover, so wary
of existence here

Now, listening to
high silence all
around, I extend
my hands toward them

Why am I here in
this lower world,
exiled from my high
ancestral realm? –

Moods of mere
wondering slashed
through with a
bright amazement

Eyes come toward
me out of a dark
mirror, glimmering just
to vanish in light trails

Moods pass through
us in the evening,
in the morning, in the
darkness and in light

Passing through
our souls, and it must
be that is the soul
in its very self –

Formless, shapeless,
in time, yet not
of time, present nowhere,
moving everywhere

Images of the street
rippled through by
white clouds the blue
sky and sunlight

A woman walking
by with a child
on a leash also
an unseen dog

High contrail streaks
and a large window
breaking up and
a child that stamps

Mind moving inside
my mind breathing
inside my breath
sleep inside my sleep

Light watching inside
my eyes that yet
are not my eyes
watching not my own

Speech inside of
my own voice
thinking in my
crowded silences

Particles of starlight
in my bones, in my
muscles the opening
of space and time

Body projected
here from the first
exfoliation of the
cosmic hosts

The orders, powers
driven through
the stars, gathered in
this lucent water bead

The sound of
a woman's cry
comes through
the dark wall

Outside there is
the sound
of the night trees
in the wind

I can see through
the open window
an opal moon
above the house

You are walking
at night down
there on the
street below

I am watching
at the window
and I am listening
to the trees

It is late but
I am waiting,
pressing my face
against my knees

How many loves
are dead in
the floating moon,
many many

How many loves
have risen in
the frothing breakers
of the tree?

How many loves
in the flowers
on the table, flowers
you gave to me?

Between one and
none there are
many there are few
uncountable

Between mirror
and dark room
there is an
open window

A burning moon
outside is waiting
for the one from whom
none may hide

In my room the sound
of the rain outside,
rain blotches on
the back door's glass

A draft of cool air
passes underneath
the bed – I feel it, lying
on the wooden floor

How I love April
with its bright cold showers,
how I love the empty
house, old, and an open door

This dispersal of
dandelion seeds
to still winds inside
a cube of ice

This blossoming
of deep sight lines
inside the sunset's
luminous gold

This crystal, this
complex form within
the night time's
sky, these stars

In the evening
mind and spirit
fill up with
a different light

Exhaustion sometimes
it is true comes
over me, lying here
dusted with ash

Underneath the ash
a coal still glows,
in the morning it is
seen above the trees

Come to me once
again my powers
bring me my energy
again, my life

Flow once more
through my two
river arms, let spring
floods run there

Let the sun rise
up into my heart,
fill me with warmth
and light and love

How much I love
the morning
with its subtle
and delicate light

Beautiful as a shell
the halo of the sun
as it begins
its apparition

Through the trees
one feels the early
and first spirit
in the new dim air

Light of the mind
come into me,
luminous spirit
of the greater light

Warmth of the fire
of all love, spirit
of empathy, of
generosity, ardor

Fly my hands out
to the compass points,
reach the four corners
of the living world

The damaged body,
the damaged mind –
droplets of health
dripped into me

Drawn through
the straws of care,
of love and caution
and self-care

Step by step slowly
the world comes
back to me made
greater with renewal

How great and glorious
you are, my image
of the beauty
of all earthly life

You whom I touched
so long ago in the
earliest moments of our
two twinned lives

Pale in lamplight
your living and
precious form, held
in my arms forever

I am sorry that you
are so disappointed,
I am not at all
what you thought

The shadow
is longer
than the house
is high, sometimes

It is so in the late
light at evening,
and also at morning
with sunrise

In the bright day
as we drive
the road reels out
swift, sparkling

The clouds are
filing overhead,
the valley is
luminous below

How green the corn
and the clover fields and
how radiant the sun
we're running toward

How wrong was
David Hume, who thought
that all impressions,
of grief or joy

Passions, exaltations –
interests, powers –
succeed each other
momently, fleeting

But instead for me
all is present, all
equally real, and all mine,
at any, every moment

How much I love
you all you the
others, strangers
of the world

Your interesting
faces manners
ways of speaking, so
different from my own

How much I
would like to
see each one, speak
to each one of you

I call transcendental
not objects but
the ways by which
we know them

I call transcendent
not beauty and all
light but what there is
behind them

And there is behind
them something,
something like your face
your eyes your mind

Asleep in the sun
it's as if my eyes
were filled with
a simmering light

As if my face
were the ground
baked dry, pulled tight
and cracking open

As if my blood
somehow up high
were currents streaming
round new islands there

Bright lit cumuli
float overhead,
they seem to have
scorch marks on them

Seething yellows
of the burning green –
cornfields nearly still
in the light wind

And beyond them
see the blue sky
of the river with
its straight row of suns

In the evening
all the pain,
fatigue and sadness
of my days

In the evening
it is as though
my life were
a bare apartment

This room in which
I sit, my window
open to the street and
the sounds outside

You the still unknown
yet perfect woman –
who are you and
where are you?

For long ages
I have waited
searching, hoping
somehow to find you

Will I ever, will
I ever know you,
ever hear your voice
or see your face?

Now the fatigue
of the evening,
and the sun is
green going down

Distracted memories
as I walk alone
late through the
bare downtown

Perhaps I will
walk by that place
where I held you and
where I kissed you once

Morning, and who
can say what
it really is – it
is the day

But what is that
and where, yes
and who especially
can be there –

Is allowed to be –
thinking acting striving
however they may, yes
who can say?

Lord, deliver me
from jerks and fools,
I have been surrounded
this whole time

This one a sewer
spewing from his mouth,
that one, a dog kennel
in her mind

Malevolent intentions
of distorted
frustrated souls, those
overwhelmed by human life

The light is cool
again on the
evening blinds, blue
dusk of September

Think of the ruby
settings of July –
coral and carmine held
in a fire-marked ring

What hand has passed
through what smoldering
now that all passion is
only to remember?

Enigmatic eyes how
interesting you were
to me, that could
speak two languages

A bright juice strained
through the palm trees' sieve,
then blinds of rain drawn by
wind across dark streets

Peach-colored lanterns marked
a path from river bridge
to restaurant, from there
to your far apartment

Lying here late light
tinting the wall blue,
can't help my thoughts
still wander, still –

They can't help it
either it would seem –
whether in daylight
darkness or half-light

Awake asleep or even
this half-conscious dream,
thinking of you
and of your smile too

If only I could
have known you
in some other world,
whole and luminous

As you should have been,
were intended to be
by the light that shone
in you even then

The absolute perfection
of your living soul,
that day we walked there
under wind-blown trees

If only I could see
your face once again
across from mine, through
the rain, walking

If only I might
touch your hand
once more, if only for
a second in the night

If only I could hear
your voice one more time
speak to me in some
actual place and time

How wonderful
is thought, since it
brings me, at the very least,
some idea of you

How glorious
my memory – and
it must be, since
you are in it so much

Since you fill it and
in such a subtle way,
how insignificant Time
since it can't take you away

Hunger of memory
for the light you were
within the darkness
of those corridors

Sun through high windows,
slashes of spring outside –
light green buds of waving trees
and the pink lilacs

And then meeting late
in a secret corner – steady
the candid pressure
of your breasts against me

Who are you now
and what are you
doing now there, there
in the other world?

That place where
you live and move
entirely apart
from where I am

From where I am
thinking of you, here
in these shadows edged
by your special light

If I came back, would
I find you? Where
would you be,
and then also, who?

Would I find you still
in your small apartment,
your light-filled clothes
hanging outside the window?

Who would be visiting,
sitting on your couch
through the rainy evenings
or the long afternoons?

Beloved in light,
standing in memory –
imponderable existence –
and in mystery

How your parents
must have loved you,
astonished every day
by your living beauty!

How to protect you,
everywhere and always –
you the irreplaceable, my
treasure beyond all treasures

I lie here
in lamplight,
thoughts of you
crossing my mind

Where are you
now, this minute?
yes, even as
I think of you

What would I see
could I be there
where you are – what,
and who, would I find?

Your smile in the dusk
of the foreign city,
strange lights with palm tree
columns behind

Traffic was glowing beads,
crowding sequins on
dark fabric, building
outlines so brightly dim

You in my memory, if I
could somehow trace
your features, gather again
dark currents of your hair

Sun going down
and I walk into
the peach-colored
cone of light there

The tree limbs
webbed and ringed
with a pale copper,
light's filmy aura

Sunset deepening
as I walk beyond both
space and time, into
their vanishing point

MOODS AGAIN

Yes there are moods
that come over us
at any odd
time of day –

Brief moments of
bright or dark,
sometimes heavy or
sometimes so light –

But why do they
come to us anyway,
why can't we just go on
even and steady?

Thinking of you still
and I know that
I most likely
always always will

You had just the right
combination, I guess
and it was something I
really needed so much

Oh just the sound of
your voice, just the
look of your smile, your eyes
your soft skin, your touch

Y ou used to make
my heart stop
and then start again,
yes it's so true

But now only
too much coffee
does anything
at all like that

Now how everything
has gotten so dull
and flat, quite dismal
really, yes everything

I haven't kissed your –
Oh I don't want to
be overly specific here,
but I can't help wonder –

I can't help but think
of someone else
and you getting all
wound up together

Doing those same things
we used to do –
it seems unthinkable,
yes how could you?

Something from elsewhere
comes into us
sometimes somewhere
and even here

Something really
unusual and perhaps
even ancient
or more than that

So every time I
think of you
my very thought
touches your spirit

Waking up again
after so long asleep
perhaps it was
hours days or years

Trying to awaken
prying back my
lids and then my eyes
to the streaming rain –

To the opening light
the door-slamming wind,
my hands reaching out
to the day, to the night

World folding back
from world like
ripples reflecting
a streaming face

It is this that I
feel unfolding
unpeeling as it were
somewhere inside

Inside outside and
all around – that
includes all, everything –
and a door is waiting

Are you thinking
of me even as
I am thinking
of you?

I wonder sometimes
and I also wonder
if you
wonder too

Opposite worlds
are men and women
it would seem –
where to begin?

The day is filled
with a thousand
thoughts
if you can see them

Night is filled
with presences
instead –
voices, images

Do you see them
as they gather
in your heart and head? –
your dream

Give me the day
back that I
remember so well,
I must have it

If only that I
could see you
standing there
just as you were

So long since
I have seen you
touched you, known
your presence

I am lying here
thinking of the way
to say
there's something

Something I
can't really put
a word
or an image to

Think of a man
falling down in
the street –
what should he do?

With these words
I step
into the light
of day

With words
I walk
into the wind
light spray

My thought
a calculation
of this one
secret way

Getting older
is a kind of
experiment – that's
how I think of it

Yes it's still me
and every day
something's the same
and different

How I'm changed
and yet I am not,
the world around
different, but not I

Inside my mind
there is
another,
listening searching

Inside my heart
there is
another,
fearing and hoping

Inside my shadow
there is
another shadow
and another sun

Days are measured
out in hours
minutes, nights
in something else

Years are measured
out in seasons
but seasons
themselves can't be

Nights and seasons
these unmeasured,
mentioned
but hardly known

The deeper life
underneath
the surface of
the calendar –

A pool on which
the dead leaves
float as though
drifting through clouds

And underneath
the dead leaves –
pools of faces with
candles lit, unlit

So many and so few
the pairs of eyes
the speaking mouths
and those spoken to

So old and so new
but always so
familiar, these
such odd expressions

Where did we
ever get them all,
did they ever suit us?
Who can tell?

You I was never
able to find –
didn't know
where you were

Streets reaching out
to the spinning
horizons – which,
which way ?

The globe was
a bursting
dandelion puff –
seeds of lives

Squeeze out
a few drops more
from the rag
of my face

A candled drop
is sometimes felt
long after
the wax is dry

And yet I can
never stop
bleeding into
this tapestry

Love came to me
in the night and
in a dream
spoke silently

I am not allowed
to say what
it was he
would convey

A burning form
and yet dark face
like the medallion
of that room

Morning and
morning's light –
this room and I'm still
thinking of you

Not as you were
but as you
might be, if
you were here

Other selves we
become when others
take hold of us,
other lives

Light veins open
the eyes inside me,
lighting their candle
letting them see

Puzzling shadows
cast up on the
enclosing wall,
still there

Other times
are living
inside me, other
faces, voices

Wind and rain
and the clouds
so turbulent in
the night storm

Now the house
is held inside
a wind tunnel
by shaking hands

Invisible, the powers
are invisible
that batter things,
that break things

I am trying to
feel my way
forward into
the new life

Great trepidation,
a nervousness
everywhere
through me

Like someone
inching out
onto the ice asking
how thick, how thin

Health of the body
and the mind –
lemon slices of light
in my closed eyes

Green paisley
teardrops of
the peacock's tail
behind my brow

Leaves and flowers
opening, climbing
upward toward
my inner sunlight

The long road
reaching out
through the green
and empty valley

Dust eddies blown
across the
gritty surface
of dull tin

Light is harsh,
hills high around
are the color
of clay flower pots

In the times of
war and revolution
cities countries burning,
where was I?

Yet I was present
somehow for the
overwhelming efforts
of those ages

I was present
somehow in the
enormous exertion
of men, of women

What one can think
another may think,
where was I
as you wondered?

Where are you now
as I am thinking
now and here –
of this, of you?

The human joins
to the human
in use of mind, this
living rationality

[Emily Dickinson]

You my great spirit
almost a kind of saint,
the light of sheer intelligence
shines in your face

No one is like you,
yet so long ago –
O how many days,
days, weeks, years –

Yes so far to travel,
trying to reach back –
entirely impossible –
things I shall never know

My only life this
seems in a way
anti-climactic,
after eternity –

That other realm
where I must have been
before my advent here
among living men

Now where am I?
sometimes I wonder –
is this really me? –
this light, this silent day

Do I really have to
die one day?
I barely lived
and so therefore, why?

What kind of day
will it be, I ask myself
who will be around me,
or will anyone?

And yet in a way
no one can be,
and we must steel
ourselves inwardly

All the beautiful
things I've seen
heard, had somehow –
a special knowledge

So persistent in
memory they seem
to beckon there,
in some way

Even the simplest
thing – a window with rain,
or the streets downtown
on a given day

How many lives
are inside of one? –
there is a kind
of restless power

An exploding in
every moment
of our life – even now
can't you feel it?

Where is my hand
leading my hand,
my legs my legs,
my thought all thought?

Looking at the rain
in the street outside,
grainy November town
and a parking garage

Houses painted green
brown and red
on the opposite way,
the people all at work

Windows give back
bare windy branches
and low clouds
of dim gray and dark gray

Bright plasma sky
burning with
turquoise and green,
luminous winter

Thunder heads
of snow clouds,
floating marble quarries
in pink light hollows

Now, Jupiter's moons
and opal streamings
in the far distance –
so bright and cold

Windy fountain,
a willow tree steps
through your sparkling,
there not there

Then a waterfall
is flashing up,
skeins of snow
slowly falling

Sun is burning in
rainbows of white depths
now misted, now
vanished in the blue

Think of the spirits
that gather somehow
around us, do
you feel them?

And some are
benevolent, they
bring instruction,
grace and light

Others are quite
different, trying
to strangle, kill – seething
in the atoms of the night

You are someone
I haven't seen in
so long, yet still
I remember

You were someone
I only knew
a while, yet now
I must still –

And I think we
always somehow
will – somehow
in another life still

A green leaf on
my forehead
fallen down from
somewhere high

I'm lying in
the shade and yet
rising through
the pond clouds

My hands reach
into the roots and
through the sky,
but where am I?

Spirit is moving
in the world
like sunlight streaming
past the hill

Spirit is opening
the sun, and light
streams through
the tree's colander

Spirit is burning
in the light, light
smothered with darkness
that now is fading

Wet leaves dry
at length, the sun
after a while –
changes everywhere

A dry cool air
in autumn, clear
and bright, and I
can see so far

Clear seeing and
clear being, what I
most need now
and not to be disturbed

The emptiness
I step into as I
cross September's field
filled with light

A loneliness and
yet more than
that, the pure existence
of something –

Of many things,
new burgeonings
of next year somewhere,
though not right here

Footsteps unheard
unseen in the air
of time, the floors
of heaven creak

Movements unseen
unknown passing
over the earth,
yet leaving scars

I am trying to
grasp the present
by the future, through
hints, traces

Simply to stand
and move, to walk
to the door or
even to the store –

I have a dentist
appointment
coming up, looking
forward to it too

Moving into and
out of places,
saying hello, seeing
those we know

Show me the new
world that will
come to be, show me
the trillion faces

I would see the
beauty in each one,
each an immortal
irreplaceable soul

I want to see
the future happiness
of everyone, I
want to see it all

Summer evening
and light steep –
a hot afternoon
so still and dry

My blinds have
shadow bars
like wavered lines
on the pool's bottom

Off-white walls –
so faintly green,
and slashes of sun
are stretched across

The soul of Man
and Woman,
souls of women
and of men

These are present
in the light and
in the shadows
of the world

These are present
living – and yet
where? yet still
I know them

A mind is tearing
the world's fabric,
latitude longitude
like tailor's chalk

Provisional stitching
of borders pulled
apart impatiently
for new adjustments

Who is working
through the clothing
that grows so heavy,
stiff with blood?

Y ou who are
reading me,
in what world
do you lie?

In what earthly
time or in what
unearthly? –yet,
intersection

Miles and miles,
years of light – I,
entirely trapped
behind these words

A ngels speak in
evening's quiet,
the lamplight
rings with voices

Angels, powers of
light building
crystals in
the charred sunset

Voices of the
furious spirits –
as earth is rushing
toward the stars

Grass is filled
with shadows
in the morning
and in the evening

But at midday
it burns pure
green as blue
as any sky

Light in columns,
cylinders of
effervescent air,
floss points of day

Shadows now
are heavy as
the boughs themselves
with steep light

Bright plasma sun
is building,
a crust of leaves
is breaking up –

Beams sketch out
light's embryo
in the tree's still
moving darkness

Sunset is a hole
burned through
the sky's paper,
depths of fire beyond

Burnt sky darkens
and a scorch mark
stains each cloud,
the paper shrinking

See the fragments
of invisibility
falling now from
light-spotted forms

Spray wind so cold
with burning pricks of rain,
the gust blows through
the staggerers –

The trees that wave
gray sleeting
from their faces and
blown back scarves

Their arms swimming
a breast stroke
before breaking off –
these water treaders

An animal may die
and yet a man
cannot – he dies, yet
he is never dead

Like a knot hole
in a tree, rings
of duration
echo out around him

His form is there
hollowed out in
woven passages
infinite cuttings can't remove

You whom I think of
so often and yet
can never again see,
do you think of me?

And yet I can't
imagine that you do,
your life so crowded
bright and visible

So many know you
as you go from
place to place, and yet
whom do they know?

You've left me here
far in your wake,
or should we say instead
that time has left?

Threads drawn away
from each like
translucent corn silk
and the grain lies there

And your woven script
dense and precise
inviting questions,
never giving too much

Times when I really
can't understand
why you didn't love me,
with fine threads of rain

Where were you
as I gathered puddles
from each corner
of the city?

Pouring them all
in front of you – I
should have done it then –
fine threads of rain

Thinking of all the time
that's passed, the river
runs on and on,
it knows no end

Is it diminishment
I feel or is
there something
building up instead?

Things grow apart
and yet together,
we are apart
and yet somehow near

That everyone might
have everything
they need, I think
of this sometimes

Give the day to
this one and
the night to that,
giving the sky to all

Food clothing shelter
and the skies themselves
exploding outward
in resplendent stars

Hands come to hands
to aid and comfort,
light filters in through
the close drawn blinds

Mind comes to mind
giving instruction,
light dawning in
new horizons there

Heart comes to heart
to bestow what the
city needs so that
it bring forth its living art

Clouds build so high
in the light, breaking
up, cut through by
light's fine strands

Billows of clouds
with huge hollows
perhaps miles across,
the air so charged

Energy aquarium –
whole airliners fish
lurking place of lightning,
spaces of infinite form

Light behind my lids
when I close my eyes
seethes in the dark
that I hold inside

Eyelids are leaves,
my skin chlorophyll –
my eyes themselves
are thinking green

When eye and mind
are joined together
green beyond green
seen known everywhere

My mind pulses now
inside my eyes,
the eyes inside me
though my deeper eyes

Mind breathes in
the time like air,
draws in long ages
gathered in a day

Mind listens attuned –
what are the strings
of light teaching it,
what can it play?

Moods come to us
and we don't know why,
they arrive like the
weather from the sky

Who can say what
the reason really is,
maybe there's some
secret buried deep

The gate of trees
looks so different,
crossed by noon light
and the dry gray leaves

Where will I be when
I am finally dead?
Will I move through
some bright other space –

Ages and infinities
streaming through
my outstretched fingers
touching webs of stars?

Or will a burning cone
be set down somewhere,
a scroll of fiery letters –
angels – furled inside?

Light is a rusty
tap water
through the blinds
so suddenly

Clouds are passing
then gone –
basket weave window,
illuminated bars

Then light's gas jet
is lowered
just a bit – the walls
a cool faint green

In the eye of the outside
whole acres are
stray bits of
paper blown by

The clouds fracture
with lightning,
the rain spins
a tunnel around

In the eye of the outside
I am flying,
exploding – calling
four dimensions at once

Steps in the mind
looking to see
listening to see
what they can find

No one can know
where I am going
where I am destined
determined to go

Moon in the trees
watching listening,
owl in the moon
waiting for something

The feather rising
in every breath
taken in the warm air
and light's explosion

Light is a pine cone
bursting its seeds
of space – dimensions
shattering around

The furnace door
of day is opened wide,
your breathing, your
walking are within

Rain through the
leaves in my face
as I turn around
and around

I make a corkscrew
of my vision
and the tree's bole
the sides of a cork

O the upside down
bottle of the tree,
green bright wine
of leaves and light

Breathing in the
new grassy rain
that comes in
through the window

The field and the
wet ground in
my room the field
and its grass

The field and
its new grass,
memories of long
past far inside

Light suffusion there
behind my eyes,
a pulp of dark light
with active forms

A swarming of points
building, burgeoning
in that most intense
yet indivisible space

Secrecy here hears
its own silence, there
where the soul
gathers its living names

What does it mean
these two arms?
See these arms that
reach from shoulders

What does it mean
to have a hand
four fingers and
one thumb opposite?

Wondering puzzlement
captures thought
when we look, gaze
at each other, at ourselves

To kill any living thing,
the greatest crime
and nothing
can make up for it

However great
you think you are,
there is nothing greater
than this hand –

Nothing greater than
this small bird too,
the fine articulations
of its wings

Blind with sunset's
needle through
my eye, light spurt
through the trees

The infinitely sharp
bright beam splits
the world in half,
fission of evening

How swift the clamorous
worlds striking off
from this one – see
the shadows fleeing

Moods come over me
that I've had before
like a sudden
light across the wall

Or a sudden wind
down through
the hall that
slams the door

Something beneath,
within each one
of them, still
unnamed, still unknown

My vision out
onto the lawn
with its one tree
and the wire fence

And the light patch
right before the
current of shadows,
just past the house

Lines through this scene
like the frost hairs
in an ice cube – yet
round what center?

It is July now
and in the
evening
the light is sepia

The middle of
the year is
passed – no more
bright nine o'clock

The middle
of the year
is passed now,
gone forever

Where are my
steps leading
as I open
these pages' paths?

Retracing the
opening furrows
of the sea
after the ship

Drawing the
candle's flame
back from
star-like drops

The child is born,
the scalpel
is set between
its legs, excising

A scream cuts
through
the room,
shrill and tearing

Now how many
shatters through
the windshield,
root-like, fanning out?

Is not a man
is not a woman
a work of art,
crystalline structure?

To harm one
I would no more
than to smash an
ancient and perfect vase

This fragile surface
this exquisite
beauty of form, and
the spirit within

Lying on the grass,
above the clouds
are pulling the
trees their way

No breeze down
here at all,
my face touched
by dandelions

But way up there
there must be
such a strong current
in that clear high air

Wind shadows
in the field,
the corn is combed
darkened waves

As though before
a storm when
water grows dim
and roughs up

Now in bright noon
see the fields
of the green corn,
this turbulence

Waiting to, trying
to get over
this latest illness –
look ahead

Thinking of all
the things
I'll do when
I'm well again

It will be like
a new life,
how nice the idea
of that new day

Leaves floating in
the sun with
strands of gold,
fledged bright grass

A chevron of blue
wavering, wood
knot of sky
in the stream's bark

Sun water poured
down around me –
visage of transformations,
knowing light

Night tree under
the moon's frost,
and the tree is
full of shapes

Arms and fingers
breaking outward
gathering starlight,
the attempt of space

Hand of the tree
touching softly and
every way known
and unknown forms

Earth of Homer and
of Hesiod I have
not seen you enough
not looked at you enough

Earth of burning skies
streaming and
luminous clouds, my years
have been too few

Masterworks of genius
overwhelming glory
and amazing art,
yet more amazing light

Rain in the morning
and so many years
within each breath
bending time

I open the curtain,
see the street
swift with water
and the trees so green

Cool misty rain
is pounding everything,
seasons flash forward
but I linger behind

Bright clouds of
afternoon over
the green valley and
the hill's steep shadow

How sovereign high
and pure, these
silent and radiant forms
passing slowly overhead

Hill and shadow
and valley and rows
of flowing corn and
the blue sky high above

Morning's light is
poured through
the leaky blinds, light
spray tinting the walls

I rise and try to
make adjustments
but get a gold beam
right in my eye

Now my dyke
of four walls
is being broken down,
washed into day

Morning comes
and night fades out,
pulled down by stars
and its dark freedoms

Objectivity clarity,
the named and
not the anonymous –
all re-emerge

Once again and
yet once again
and yet slowly too,
the Good succeeds

Stepping now
into the end of time,
my time and
not the world's

A kind of silent
antechamber
to an elsewhere
and an otherwise

Conduct is the tight rope walk
beyond the known,
the way, the style of
standing at this threshold

You overmastered
with beauty, do you
grasp a form,
do you grasp a soul?

Seed pod of day
bursting into light,
the sun exclaiming
down its corridors

Yet in the human,
exquisite beauty
holding all of that
light setting it apart

Like a pinwheel
the world burns and
spins into
strewn charred pieces

Who can say
what it will do,
what it will be
even in one year?

And yet whatever
and yet whenever,
there must be listening and
charity for the stranger

Thinking with my
cup of coffee
near me now and my
thoughts somewhere

Are they over,
around, up
above me or somehow
in my brow?

What is thinking,
and what is mind –
what is a person
anyhow?

Light of a new time
and I would step
out into it,
I would be there

And I would restore
all those others
too, the many
who went before

If only there were
some way somehow
to do it, somewhere
the magic door

There is a music
of every time –
try to find it now,
try to hear it

There is a vision
for each land –
try to see it,
try to make it real

There is a world
inside the world,
build it – see it, hear it
and make it whole

You who are
reading me,
in what world
do you lie?

When will truth
pass from me
to you or else
from you to me?

When will we
see each other
face to face, and know
each other truly?

THE PRESENT

A low wall there
made of stones
the men have gathered
unnoticed a long time

Socrates speaking
Augustine reads aloud
Luther's annunciation
the Oath of the Tennis Court

These voices call us,
address us again
and yet once again
silent and strong

Sounds of the rain
and the night outside
create a halo around
the lamplight's brow

Who is the victor
who the vanquished
in this one moment
here and now?

Applause perhaps
or a strange hissing
rumor denunciation
in the low sound of rain

Streams and counter-
streams through
night's stars themselves
flowing so rapidly

Time currents surge
forward surge backward
both at once and
the horizon closes

Now meet the stranger
in the corner
of the public square
stepping from the crowd

He came into
the empty square
from the four routes
of the night

Someone was waiting
they stepped from
their doubled shadow
dripped from the street's leaf

Slid down the stem
of an alleyway – was
it a woman was it a man
running toward the day?

Leaf heart meaning
fallen from the
infinite branch of words
into my eye's palm

I step through the door
the words indicate
but cannot open
branch waves surging

Branches of surf
and the froth – weightless –
of a bird's nest
like a crown held up

The cattails' lances
in the staggering red sun
are rifles set in rows
are soldiers massing

The silence on the
road side as the
purple clouds are
steeped further whispers

Shadow legs
blinking toward you
like scissors flashing
like knives

A hand is raised
in the morning lane
holding a coin
that holds a face

A face is raised
in the morning sky
holding an eye
that holds a sun

A sun is raised
in the morning night
holding a light
that holds a hand

Your problems
can be solved
by watching
listening

Those ill
can be helped
by application
of thought

The world
is changed
by thought
by concepts

Y ou who come after
me out of the
coat pocket of time
and sun-gated streets

You who come after
my steps in
the moon-fountained
shadow leaf parks

Holding your silver rings
inside your own
closed mouths full of
futures and pasts

D ecision within each
syllable of breath
the text of history
arches and burns

The wick of a glance
is touched to the pool
of oil so that a million
olive branches char

These darkened veins
lead to the heart
of the silent world
tracked in a hand's page

World arteries
harden the heart
straining tightening
in blinded pain

This gasp in the mouth
of historical time
billions of blood cells
standing still

Sunset ice water
puddle of darkness
and a forehead
on wet asphalt

If I speak to you
who then
can know you,
does anyone?

If you speak to me
who then
can know me,
do you?

If another is
here with us
who then, what
then are we?

Do not look for me
in the hail storm
in the cornflower blue
the bronze sunrise

I am silent by
the cellar window
turned to the ground
and in hiding

There are camps
of us here there
flashing shrapnel-like
signals through the dawn

Hail storm of earth
above the hawthorn
streetlight ink-colored
smoke of clouds

Sunset menstruation
between the buildings'
wide open cleft
of historical spasms

Earth screaming
in orgasms of
terror violence
thought's blood stains

Aluminum pole light
pulse of night lot
heart squeeze shout
dog pack gather

Shadow legs rule
granule paper of
goose bumped asphalt
beneath rat lab shine

Glans penis past
zipper vagina
fountains bright urine
on an unconscious head

World swarming of
roaches through
the cracks of history
in the darkness of time

World confusion of
voices shouting whispering
keeping silent in their
secret knowledge

Conspiracy ringing loud
in these falling coins
the dense traffic
these blood red lights

Air filled with
Gun powder smoke
And the rain follows
plumb lines down

The woods opposite
are thinking of us,
holding those to kill us who
bleed from it in streams

The sponge of the future
is held in the present's
grip so heavy and
full of blood

Faces are framed in
the television screen
the computer screen
grave and luminous

Mouths move speaking
meaningless chopped
words some still
bleeding all dead

Eyes looking out
from the light quite
inviolable and watching
from that distance

Light spurts into
the earth's mouth,
the horizon is
drawing up the sun

Rush of morning air
through the dark grass,
and the field's hair
stands on end

Hurry, hurry
yes the bright veins
are saying quickly
through pouring sands

Rustling of corn leaves
silk from the waterfall
of bright grass through
the sun's pupil

Green kiwi slices
loom up in
the dark of
sun memories

The field flows
with water the sky
streams with grass and
it burns the last hay

Burning blue sky
I would like to
step into it
walking far away

Go away, away
into the bright
blue day somewhere
sometime somewhere

Dust on the blinds
glitters to the day
above the trees
the clouds flow through and on

Three hundred cities
burning in France
France is France again
three hundred cities

Flames cut through
the reams of paper
flames cut through
the civic files

Flames cut through
the anonymous programs
the official forms
the dead officials

This is London
the BBC the voice
of England others
gathering beneath

Beneath the resonant
and official voices
many yet unknown
unseen yet speaking

Beneath the resonant
and official voices
are unknown voices
not for long unknown

Those met on the street –
who knows the thing
that is the important thing
the mark set for all?

Rumors spill in gray light
from picture screens
speak from radios
glow on terminals

Who knows the thing
that is happening
that is real not an illusion
affecting finally all?

Events build forward
a disease with no symptoms
silence is epidemic
unknown unspoken screams

Hear it in the shopping mall
hear it in the parking garage
in the supermarket's clang
the waiting room's pages

Who knows the thing
that is building forward
the people crouch like rabbits
but there are some who know

The circumcised boy
screams the delivery room
his bowels evacuate
he's strapped spread eagle

The homeless man
lies under cardboard
beside the steal dumpster
locked shut against misuse

The cop car's probe
splits the vaginal
alleyway right through
searching its tense walls

American solitaire
adrift on the raft
of a city through
the confusing night

Cold streams of terror,
paranoid bright neon –
violent elated moods
cooled out in a cell

O grim companions
where are you going
as one put drunk into the mail boat
where will you wake up?

Each word is felt
in the vibrations
of its web so
quick and tense

The scripture pared down
one notch at a time –
gradient comprehension,
and so it is mine

I offer it to the others
where they may find it
I hope that they find it
at some point in time

Delusional Americans
with your
nasal voices
and bad food

You have made
a special virtue out
of trivializing yourselves,
and now what?

Those who so
lack self-respect
cannot respect
anyone, anything

Delusional Americans
with your silly
voices every statement
is a question

Everything is
so cute so
very cute Walt Disney
pours paint buckets

Of blood human
animal the
bloody gloves
of the circumciser

I walk among
the others but
I do not want
to be with them

I know them
but they though
quite real do
not know me

I know them
only too well
by their voices
by their faces

Raucous woman
with a stupid
crass voice I
piss in your mouth

Critical woman with
three or four
stupid cliché ideas
so loud

Ignorant woman
sitting in front
of the television
with a magazine

I attempt to
summon the
words that will
say it, truth

Where there is
a hand an eye
has been placed
inside of it

Where there is
a mouth there
is an ear
of listening

Delusional Americans
your country is
a pile of shit
is a vast pig sty

The stench of
its moral
degradation reaches
to the clouds

Blighted land,
the corrosion
of sheer ignorance
eats your aluminum

Delusional Americans –
your promiscuous
girls with their nasal voices
everything's a question

Your obese ignorant
children your
fascist ministers
and rapacious MDs

I would not
wipe my ass
with your culture
now, it is shit

Delusional Americans
you want to
destroy the countries
to the south

You want to
destroy the countries
to the west
and to the east

Your bankers
spit in your face
you lick it up
you swallow it

Delusional Americans
scum and rabble
sweepings from
the streets of Europe

Your supposed equality
is fictitious it is
really quite a joke
the classless society

Your petit-bourgeois
fantasies of god
country and so forth
have come to this

Obama says
to the gulf coast –
eat shit and die
red state scum

Enjoy your
benzene
courtesy of
Cheney

The ship has
struck the ice berg,
but the passengers
are still dancing

Blighted land
your empty heroes
your mindless writers
ignorant teachers

The scum and rabble
of your board rooms
your penthouse
riff raff

Your deadbeat generals
and contractors
your drug pushing
circumcising doctors

The clamor of
non-being I
hear in the
crowd's laughter

The roar of
summer flies
burning inside
the webbed pane

The deluded
talk and whisper,
they worry and
count their pennies

The false teaching
of the corrupt
and bogus teacher,
the corrupted university

Delusional blather
of the commentators,
the public masturbation
of demagogues

The confused frightened
and ignorant populace,
worrying and talking
trying to distract themselves

The light of clear
reason and I
place the word
almost by itself

The clear voice
of reason unheard
most often and yet
still somehow heard

Sometimes remembered
amid the noise
of the news articles
and celebrity gossip

The spirit is
a sheath
of feeling images
webs of memory

The child's
cut into at birth
and it must
scream so loud

Here now I
do not but yet
set down this
syllabic indictment

Delusional Americans
you run to vote
or at least walk,
but to where?

Delusional Americans
you imagine
the ultimate
board game

And yet it is
a game you
understand only
your mindless games

Delusional Americans

'how ya doon'
you say, even
greetings are insults

And straight your
narcissistic
requirements drive
them out of the room

Stench of conceit
poisons further
the already reeking
public square

I walk among
the others but
I do not want
to be with them

I know them
but they, though
quite real, do
not know me

I know them
only too well
by their voices
by their faces

Raucous woman
with a stupid
crass voice I
piss in your mouth

Critical woman
with three or four
stupid cliché
ideas so loud

Ignorant woman
sitting in front
of the television
with a magazine

Delusional Americans
you turn out
to vote and the
candidate appears

Milkweed pod
of finance bursting
its seams, seeding
random markets

Calculated losses
and intentional
scarcities pen up
the scared millions

Delusional Americans
loud talking broad
walking through
the world

Trying to eat
everything in
sight to fuck
everyone you meet

Your mouths your
vaginas assholes
can never quite
be filled

CIRCUMCISION

Historical memory
cut through this,
sutured into
the body

Mythological
anatomy excised
with stainless intent,
the suspect removed

I am suspect still
not a Jew yet
must be one anyway
though despite that

Memory crowded
inside my
hand my eye
cannot reach it

I do not want
my own mind,
I spit it here
like blood

Blood stain of writing
never to be
wiped out of
these bandages

Excision of future
feelings preemption
of knowing blindness
in advance of sight

Circumscribing
of insight by a
priest's or a doctor's
hand

The unknown
is a sheath for me
now the
unknowable

Pain in that flesh
where the medical
quack's incision
cut through

That part still
remembers and
you who read me
are put off

Impermissible speech
I must suffer
in silence I
must bleed and smile

This brown ring
where the water
was drawn away and
unlike water cut

At times the empty
receptacle cannot
be filled again
all entirely gone

Find the seven
seas anyway
search for them through
dark passages

This scar
is a writing
of invisible
enigmatic letters

I must search
for them in
sponge-like muscle
and blood vessels

In skin as fine
as a cob web
I must search for
the hidden book

A Jew by a
special election
I walk through
polished corridors

I walk through
streets buildings
nominated structures
so many dark cubes

A secret mark is
on me meaningful
yet speechless enigma
only you can see

Your tongue
searches for
the words that are
hidden there

Or so they must
be so I
have been told
hygienic letters

Pure and clean
the signs waiting
for you, you suck for so long –
it is useless

Invisible words
are visible in
street traffic lights
or window signs

Invisible words
gleam like streaks
in the polished floor
the Catholic rectory

Invisible words
are trailed littered
in this scar that
looks like sediment

[Issenheim Altarpiece]

Christ considers
his mother with
a certain coolness,
we must likewise

Tunnel of space/time
draws me body
and mind you
must suck hard

You must suck hard
to draw me back,
but no I flow up
like a flame away

Women of
the mid-western
plains you must
explain to me

Statistical regression
draws you
back to a mean,
you are bound

Space and time
themselves
must wait upon your
cries but do not

Denuded acorn
integument
ripped down to
expose the tree

The tree of Jesse
spewed past
pearly gates reaching
darkened shores

This votive candle
drips its wax
pours its droplets
down your throat

I am sutured
to the realm of
symbolic meaning
here exactly

Arrogant American
woman why
do you
prefer this?

What is the
nature of
my body my self,
how to know it?

You why
did you need
to alter so
this body?

You chose
to do this –
was it really for
your given reasons?

Yet I can still
feel the scalpel's
cutting, and so I
do not believe you

Knife cut relived
every day of
one's life from now
until the end

Continuous ache
as though from
a recent incision,
continuous echo

What other things
does one not know,
what other things
has one been told?

A scalpel a cutting
instrument awaits
the child at birth
for hygiene

Mothers line up
for this latest thing
with approval
of the physician

Nurses women
prepare the child
strapping him down
with legs spread wide

A wound is shown
on the very surface
the suturing there
webbed yet precise

This done to exhibit,
the glans must be
denuded entirely,
meet for the eye

Every man must be
a kind of Philoctetes
his wound must go with him
as he walks his island

The White male
bleeds as the
female does bandaged
between legs

The Black male
also bleeds the
antipersonnel mine
fragmentation grenade

A razor is drawn
across the eye
the lid is cut off
the film snapped

Indiscretion with
regard to the
unsayable I have
attempted it

You kiwanas
you high fiber
you pizza hut
you red lobster

The boy strapped down
spread eagle
when just born
a razor is set there

The body is
a sheath
not for the soul
but for the felt

What I
cannot feel
I cannot know
nor understand

What is not
felt is dead,
to me unknown
I am dead to it

These words
come forth from me
quite spontaneously
unpremeditated

These words
are not allowed
in official venues
nor these thoughts

And too I am glad
that others
have what I
was not allowed

How do you
feel when I
am present there,
am I ever really?

Without mediation
two objects can
but two lives
cannot touch

The attempt becomes
exacerbation,
there is this
profound dissonance

I think of
intercourse at
times I realize
it is impossible

The power
is not merely
to perform,
it is to feel

It is not
performance
that I lack,
I cannot feel

It is not
surprising
surgery involves
anesthesia

It always
must but
should that be
its purpose?

Absence of feeling
imposed
by the physician
by the priest the quack

You like
the way this looks
better
evidently

It is strange
you are so
precise about
such things

But with such
broad experience
there comes
discernment

Impermissible
sensation
and not merely
thought or speech

That those two
should be
forbidden, this I
have long known

But what
does it mean
to forbid
sensation in itself?

Rights of
the child and
so we
practice cutting

It is more
convenient to
cut newborn
children boys

Lacking this
we might lose
sight of our
most basic values

Love is by means
of a vehicle
it must
have a means

In itself it
is a movement
but not from
idea to idea

It is not
disembodied
it is a physical
spirit in part

Semitic religion
requiring the
excision of knowledge
blinded sight

As though from
inspection of
the sun itself
blank and luminous

God of the Jews
of the Christians
of the Muslims
now and forever

The circumcised boy
is strapped
spread eagle
in a plastic frame

The doctor
cuts away
one third of
the penis's skin

Done for
hygienic reasons
important to maintain
the public health

I must ex-
perience the
many in order
to know the one

My lack my
scar requires
this repetition
of knowledge

Only that can
answer but yet
never restore,
endless and useless

The prostitute
is for us
the one woman
we must know

She is the body
we must draw
around ourselves
filled with knowledge

As a mouth is full
of infinite words
or a memory
of the world

Networks
of feeling that
draw us to a
deeper feeling

And that
awaken
questions, and yet
what is feeling?

What is feeling
in itself if I
am filled with it
here and now?

A kind of tube
that blood
traffic fills
on its journey

Networks of light
that are
nonetheless
quite dark

Networks of feeling
that draw and
pull into the
deepest question

The woman makes
it known that
she prefers the other
a full branch

Not a stripped one
a looser skin not
one stretched so tight
a living thing

Not a skinned rabbit
a lid to an eye
not a bare stripped
drying cornea

The spirit is
a sheath
of feeling images
webs of memory

The child is
cut into at birth
and it must
scream so loud

Here now I
do no longer but
set down this
syllabic indictment

The circumcised boy
screams the delivery room
his bowels evacuate
he's strapped spread eagle

The homeless man
lies under cardboard
beside the steal dumpster
locked shut against misuse

The cop car's probe
splits the vaginal
alleyway right through
searching its tense

Cut made into
time and a
living body, yet this
is my memory

I am a moth
fixed on this
pin, the physician's
scalpel the lie

The lie comes
out of your mouth
here and now
out of everywhere

Repellent woman
with your mouth
full of lies and
curt simplifications

Grandiose woman
attired in jewelry
and perfume
black silk money

Arrogant woman
the whole universe
balances on
your clitoris

Hypocritical speech
the effluent filth
of liars money men
the higher prostitutes

Hypocritical thought
the classroom
echoes with
silent brutality

Hypocritical masses
also this the last
and your stench
reaches to the skies

MOTEL POEMS

Knot hole slammed
open the gladiola
swallows gulps
the wooden handle

Taut arctic sheet is
dimpled by four
knees a buttocks
plucks abdomen hairs

Darkened room air
is sucked in
with faint nausea
by two mouths

A man who loves
splits open
a shell by means
of a snail

A mouth that
cannot be closed
is fed countless
living things

The turkey is
stuffed to its
ribs with
the untold millions

She lives on
all fours chewing
through the
darkened room

Invisible collar and
the leash of long
brown hair and
softest barking

Running now
through the dream
self valley chasing
shadow rabbits

Always open mouth
eats well and much
and considers
quieted then

A stainless finger
is set down
like a light beam
through the pond's dark

The bottom is dredged
and the throat
tickled to vomiting
like a senator

Come let him
tell you this
curved branch
rising in

Here where you
drink from
the fountain's hair
pulling the waves

You assent
with a raised chin
tipping the jug
of froth

His cigarette end
splits the knot hole
of her smoke ring
his adze splits

The wood grain
of her face
the silence ticks
with pelvic lappings

The drum head
of a white sheet
beats out
faster faster time

The tip of
your tongue
lodged in a
glycerin drip

You inquire
of that small
single eye
working your way in

Then your teeth
so white
placed on the scar
that is there

The handle is
pushed all the way
into the hand
that slides over it

Your throat
has its own
gripping power
amazing really

Foxy, your teeth
chew through wires
You suck up eggs
by a rooster's necks

Although you have
fucked everyone
yet still this slit is
so slight and small

like the opening of
a milkweed pod
white feathers of angels
packed inside

an eyelid that can
never open really
and yet must
still try, try

VOICE SETTINGS, VOICE RISINGS

TEN NEOCLASSICAL STUDIES

I

Light fills the room,
the evening sun
is a thought itself
as yet unknown.

Space is living
in its own moment,
time is a searching
through lucid veins.

Inside the sun
seed choirs of angels
are packed in a hive
of molten glass.

II

My searching fingers
comb through your hair
as the gills of a fish
breath through a wave.

Now my open fingers
rifle buds of leaves – O
my shouting mouth
through your echoing caverns.

III

Movements through
space and time
footprints on pages
wind blowing deep

Tunnel of night
trees your destiny
pulling you forward
hands all around

Known in reflection
yes half incredulous
consider your strange
luck life so unknown

IV Her Hair [i.m. Amy Winehouse]

Light is a fire somehow
around your hair,
the god himself
is struggling there --

A bush that cannot
burn up in flame,
a flame that tears
itself, spiriting apart.

O how you hold
strange texts of miracles
tangled inside
such wordless art.

V

The town under
mists of rain,
and so...will I ever
see you again?

Paths known
in darkness
our lives
moving on,

My thoughts
staying with you
long long after
you're gone.

VI

These leaves of faces
thrown in
the time-fire – now
see them burning there.

Faces framed in
a fringe of light
in the mind now trying
and trying to sleep –

As though in
a flash of sun,
or the prints of some lipstick
on a napkin.

VII 2011 [for Project Lie-alot]

Hayauasca!
High Tabasco,
yes, I have
drunk you down,

O I am so
dizzy
as I walk
through town.

Show me who my friends are
and my enemies
(O the Reptilians! –
soon we'll be on our knees!)

VIII

You there who walk
through my mind
-- admittedly only
sometimes at night,

Almost as if you
couldn't stand,
or else not stand for,
being seen in the light –

I do not ask who
and do not ask why,
I only ask what
you are keeping from me.

IX

A crystal of light
in the quiet room
cut through now
with thought-forms –

Unknown worlds
exfoliate, clamoring –
invisible, infinite –
around each mote,

Unsuspected things
opening, deepening –
mountains, canyons,
this silent turbulence.

X

My mind when I
close my eyes
dreaming sees you
sitting there.

Time has gone by
and yet still
I can't help it I
still think of you –

How amazing it
would be to see
you again actually
sitting near me.

LYRICS

I

I have never been
able to find
the one that I needed –
where was she?

Once I did perhaps, for a while,
her name written here;
circumstances of one kind or another,
mutilation perhaps,
of various kinds,

Misery deliberately designed –
who were you? Where? –
your name written here.
But I am so tired of the pain,
I can't take it anymore.

II

It was never really
there for me,
I could never really find
someone to
care for me,
no I just couldn't.

And if I ever did
before too long I'd find
out that – no,
she really wouldn't,
even though I thought she should.

III

Loneliness is
something that everybody
talks about,
but no one ever
does anything about it.

Unlimited light
pouring through
the window
onto the floor,
shining on the boxes by the door.

IV

How I would like
someone
I could love completely,
someone smart and pretty
sweet and kind of sexy too.
But I don't know,
I don't think it can happen here.

How I would like
someone
who could be everything
you would ever want,
that total love
we all want to have.
But I don't know,
I don't think it can happen here.

V

Well it was just
something that came
and went,
yes, an old flame
you might say,
although that's rather quaint.

Yes, she was
someone I knew
long, long, long
ago – oh it's been so long
that no one – not even I –
wants to hear this song.

And you might
ask me why
did it have to end,
Yes, who can say?
since even now I think about it,
long into the night
and sometimes in the day.

VI

I am sitting here
waiting for the time
I'll stop thinking of you
maybe I'll write something –
maybe it'll even rhyme –
but I don't really know
what to do
to be done with you.

I'm sitting here
waiting for my heart
to stop beating for you,
maybe even start
in on something else,
something, you know,
kind of new –
but it just goes to show
that I don't really know
what to do
to be done with you.

VII

New York rain
is at it
coming down
quietly over the town
once again,

A cool gray rain
-- and I think of you --
coming down
softly again --
just as the street sounds dim
and evening comes on.

VIII

I want you
near me -- yes,
but yet
I can't help but know that
it really won't likely be so.

I want you
to touch me -- oh
it would be
just beyond wonderful,
and yet I don't think you ever will.

I want you
to love me -- for don't you know
that every soul needs
an intimate counterpart
to finish its secret art.

IX

I wonder where
you are
and what
you're doing there.

So many miles
and worlds
apart
it often feels –

Looking away
into
the sky
on a given day.

TO THE READER

You who read
me who are
you and what?
your eyes far

So far down in
lamp lit water
your face obscured
in the bright screen

I am searching now
for the thought that
I cannot think
by myself alone

My writing is
this searching –
here, now what
I cannot find

I cannot find
and cannot grasp
by myself alone –
you must help me

You who read me
help me to find
to know here what
I cannot know

What is the grip
that one mind
has can have
on another one?

You who read me,
what do you think?
tell me, hear me
and let me hear

What are the steps
now taken in
the same path by
how many walkers?

Known, unknown
came opening
these moments here
waiting silence

Known, unknown
thinking is felt
heard waited for
and not attempted

Luminous vigilance
now tense and quick,
the confused order
the silent clamorous

The sounds outside
the window as
I think these words
these thoughts

Felt as thought
time burgeons
separates multiplies
in these syllables

Where is the
sentence taking
me in its reasoned
improvisation?

FOR SIMONE WEIL

Simone advises
there is always a choice,
and those in the past
chose as they did

Consequences ramify
shatter through the world,
the maps of history
are smashed windshields

Accordion pleats
of time drawing out
and then squeezing in
toward crisis

You at the table
there in the café –
your hands
in your lap, Simone

What one thinks
another may think,
but what were you
thinking, being?

What is existence –
that we have it and
then do not? Where
are you, Simone?

Soon now in
the Nothing I
and with all
of the others

Old photographs
are so haunting –
spots of noon light
on tables and chairs

The dapple of trees
on bare arms on necks
bent over books –
Where are they?

They speak of your
homeliness –
graceless, unattractive,
so they say

And yet I say
that you were beautiful,
at least in one
photograph

And therefore were –
the light – there,
at that moment,
knowing what they did not

Did you look down
at your hand
while writing –
every hand's the same

My hand like yours,
crawling through light,
scratching at the wall
of a written page

Touching the face
in an old photograph
of someone long gone
who will not return

Youth is exhausting
I sometimes think
we should pity
those who have it

You burned up
not with youth
only, as most
others do –

Getting merely older
through cindered days –
you burned in the fire
that must never stop

Thought is a fire
that burns through
everything, the world
is mere paper in it

How so then,
a young woman –
how should she
survive?

If she stand
in the middle –
in the very middle –
she is most unwise

They speak of your
awkwardness –
clumsy I have
heard it said

And so they,
what of them?
Nureyev every one
of them, no doubt

Your courage, your
energy for others –
to work in a factory,
to fight in Spain

IDEAS

With the other eye
I am listening
with the other ear
watching

With the other mind
I am feeling
outside of space
outside of time

With the other self
in the unseen light
in teeming emptiness –
the living concepts

The other mind,
that above me
that guides, that
accompanies

Felt at moments,
seen at moments –
felt and heard
speaking, showing

The other mind
I am given,
mind not my own
moving elsewhere

A plane above
the world-breath,
as the sky is above
the wind passing

Now, a time
without movement
subsisting inside
our own thought

Is it your thought
or is it mine
in this moment
as you read me?

Light is filled
with a world or worlds,
and yet it is
not really filled

Light is filled
with a thought,
and yet still it is
not a thought

Light is filled
with its own mind,
and yet I feel
its warmth, its touch

Unseen light
this beauty a
purely conceptual
Beatitude

Emptiest idea
radiantly clear,
invisible
and so full

Filled with a warmth
that is other-than,
filled with a
Being elsewhere

Voices from nowhere
who or what
is speaking silent
and unmistakable?

I set down words
familiar, alien
each one obscure
in its strange depths

Feel now each of
an unknown origin,
fathomless light hidden
unseen in thought

THE STRANGER

Stranger from the dark
wood you I
remember so well
I can never not

Stranger yet so
new to me and
always this is
the way I must live

Remembering you never
to be free of
that memory so
clear yet still inside me

We lay there on
the floor on
the light itself
that fell in

That was our
carpet drawn slowly
away with the
slowest fleeting hours

Give me back
that time those few
hours minutes
days, that light

Where are you
I am thinking
no it is not thinking
it is not a thought

Amputation of you
worse than the
scar stitched into
my flesh at birth

Hemorrhaging of
life trauma of
memory of breath
itself a cry

Her nipples are
pinches of
brown sugar
held between lips

They are buds
that open into
flowers roses
in my mouth

I am swallowing
roses petals
and perfume
drowning in it

Y our kisses yes
your skin the
softest ever there
is no way to say it

Our four hands
underneath
white sheets like
roots under snow

A jar is sealed
with a lid inside
of it clear honey
where your eyes shine

Y our mouth with
cigarette smoke
and the wind
is full of rain

Autumn streets
that smell like
leaves burning fresh
in the cold night

Your hair is
full of tobacco scent
of chopped sweet
dried flowers hay

SPACE TIMES

Bright lit cumuli
float overhead,
they seem to have
scorch marks on them

Seething yellow
of the burning green –
cornfields nearly still
in the light wind

And beyond them
see the blue sky
of the river with
its straight row of suns

In the evening
all the pain,
fatigue and sadness
of my days

In the evening
it is as though
my life were
a bare apartment –

This room in which
I sit, my window
open to the street and
the sounds outside

You the still unknown
yet perfect woman –
who are you and
where are you?

For long ages
I have waited
searching, hoping
somehow to find you

Will I ever, will
I ever know you? –
ever hear your voice
or just see your face?

Now the fatigue
of the evening,
and the sun is
green going down

Distracted memories
as I walk alone
late through the
bare downtown

Perhaps I will
walk by that place
where I held you and
where I kissed you once

Morning, and who
can say what
it really is – it
is the day

But what is that
and where, yes
and who especially
can be there –

Is allowed to be –
thinking acting striving
however they may, yes
who can say?

MEMENTO

Odd quick memories
fragments strange moods
possess me, move
through me at moments

The thought of her or
else of her – one
and another one, and
each of them gone

Gone not to me only
but absolutely, entirely –
each of them so beautiful –
strange feelings tear me now

You with your voice
of smoke, your topaz eyes,
the tense grip of your hands –
your hair so heavy, fragrant

Autumn rain slashed
through the midnight trees,
the streets shone wet,
and then an early snow

But we were hidden
deep inside your room,
there where you held me tight
telling your mysteries

In the autumn of the year –
your flooded window,
wind and hail outside
and leaf-filled gutters

In your rain-dimmed room
and in your bed – how
you lay across it then
spreading your legs wide

And then I dipped my face
down to the warm broth
that you were, drinking it in,
cupful by cupful

How you laughed
when we were together,
when we took a shower
you were like a child

Our fingers interlaced,
fists clenched, playing
at push and pull, then
collapsing to embrace

How I remember
your voice, your smile,
the look of such happiness
on your face

Such happiness
you gave me
I can't even say –
infinite gratitude

It is impossible
to express this
life-transforming, this
absolute miracle

May all and only
good follow you –
wherever you go, in
whatever you do

Light painted its dark
stripes of shadow
across your face
your arms your breasts

Light planted a tree
of the knowledge of
all earthly good in
my eyes that watched you sleep

Light planted its dark
core of burning fire,
with wayward ironic art,
inside your wayward heart

Here are my hands
and here my two wrists,
cut them now – let
the blood flow out

Let it flow out
all over you – yes,
flow out and out
all over you

I give it all
to you now,
for you already have
the heart it came from

You and you and you –
there are always still
so many – all my
half-forgotten loves.

Half-forgotten is yet
half-remembered too.
I think of each one of you
and can never forget.

But inside my many
there is yet one –
walking waiting somewhere
for her alone.

My life a memory
so strange uncanny
flashes within a space
of light and faces around

Spoken words voices
mere printed words
long ago old pictures
their stilled gestures

These I have loved
in the days of light
and time, all these
mere perishing I loved

Young women long ago
where have they gone?
into the moonlight flashing
through the web of trees

Down corridors pale arms
and legs bare breasts
and laughter so much
laughter now quite silent

Through the web of leaves,
of grass, the searching
of the white moon
never, can never stop

It is as though
I really never lived
and yet have lived –
yes, a hundred lives

Reaching hands out –
countless the shadows
around me, silence
is drawing quite near

What will the change be,
then, when it comes?
And those left around
will say what of me?

O the night air
comes in through
the window – here,
I am still here!

To breathe the instant –
single, expanding,
multiplying somehow
to other instants more:

A time, a space,
a life itself,
asserts, is caught,
falters, regains, and hopes

Every breath I take,
you are inside me:
my eyes watch, ears listen,
and yet you see, you hear

Voices of my thoughts,
attended, opened to,
reveal a speaking, then
disclose my compass points

What have I gained
from such instruction?
--a dark tutorial,
yet a light as well

Perfect beauty and
the luminous grace
that you were – all
quite irreparable

The devastating memory
the craving itself
craved, no matter what
the disappointment

Sadness beneath sadness
sinking down not
able to be lightened
by yet the slightest hope

Taken from me what
was taken from me
and how early, yes,
who could imagine

Hands in the dark
passing and passing
over me and I ask
whose are they

I can never forget
the ministry of pain,
the setting of a mark
before all time

I cannot help these
strange feelings grip
me now repeatedly
echoes of other days

Times overlap now
simplest things multiply,
superimposed former lives
who, one wonders, when?

So many losses and yet
a gathered richness too,
as in deep varnished wood
reflections, amber, gold

Three Statements, During Illness

I

Seigneur, you give me
This very illness,
Latest of several –
And yet still
I continue to know
The splendor of existence –
Its inward if not outward freedom,
Its moments of sudden clarity –
And still
The beauty of the world,
Both above and below:
Above,
Where there is light,
Regnant divinity –
Splendor
Beyond what may occur to sight,
Ultimate comprehension
Both within
And by
The ultimate of mind;
Below, where
There is beauty
Delimited within each thing,
Unlimited in all –
The radiant, the intricately ordered whole.

II

See light come
To the window
In the early morning,
And I do not feel well;
Attempt to rise
Then consider the alternatives –
Yes, it is ill.
Still, to be able to know the day;
Still, to see the light
That fills it
Even part way
As yet
But soon will fill it all,
Expand it by an infinite degree
Beyond the limited demesne of night
Outward to an absolutely filled infinity –
This is magnificence itself,
Given here, and now, to all, to me.

III

Open the eyes
Open the mind
Open the gateways of the body as well,
These too
Must be opened
Just as the day,
Each for itself, each in its own way,
Each drawn by the others outward
Toward a whole –
A single person who attempts to rise.
And so the light
Dimly radiant
There on the opposite wall
I see not merely with my eyes
But with my living, breathing, with my moving here
as well,
Such as it is. And yet more truly is:
In the mind that also there must see –
In the light that is given there to see
By the mind that is given there to know:
A living nature that can never be denied,
However much now narrowed and impaired.

Sources

Near is
And difficult
To grasp, the god.
But where danger is there also grows
That which saves.
In darkness the eagles dwell,
And fearless too
Men, native sons of the alps, cross over the abyss
On bridges lightly built;
Therefore, since the peaks of time
Lie heaped around,
And loved ones dwell at hand
Languishing on separate hills,
Give us, therefore, faultless and pure, water,
O give us, and wings that faithful in mind
We might cross over and return.

Thus
I spoke,
When sudden
A spirit took me,
Faster than expected, further
Than I ever thought to come,
From where I dwelt, my own house;
They faded into dim and twilight,
As we went further, the shadowed woods,
The never-still brooks of my homeland.
Nor did I recognize the lands,
Yet soon, in glory, earliest radiance, gleaming,
Mysterious in its golden mist,
With every step of the sun, fast arising
With the breath of a thousand peaks,
Asia burst into flower.

Stunned I looked around
For something I knew;
The broad thoroughfares were strange to me
And the gardens, so full of flowers,
A still fire.

Come to us now, fire,
We here uncertain
To look on the day;
When the testing
Has gone through our knees –
May one yet acknowledge
The cry of the forest;
But we sing, coming from Indus
Far abroad and
From Alphaeus, and how long we
Have searched for the Fated –
Only a winged grasp can seize
That which is near
And come through to what
Is beyond it. And now we must build here
Where the streams
Have watered the land,
And if the fields grow thick,
And the creatures themselves in summer
Come closer to drink of the stream,
Men will flourish there as well and pass on.

Called then the Ister.
Beautifully it stays. Pillars
Of the forest, their leaves
Burn and tremor. They stand in the wild
Upright, each under the other rising,
From them a second mass juts up,
A forest roof sprung from the rocks.

Little wonder it seems that Herkules even was here,
 A bidden guest, far-shining,
 Down from Olympus,
 As from the burning isthmus he came
 Seeking shadow and shade
 For thought: they were
 Full of courage in that place
 Yet they too, even the spirits, need the cool:
 Therefore he was drawn to these springs,
 The yellow sand of the shore,
 Their fragrance in the breeze, their darkness too,
 Stands of fir trees there;
 And through them, in deepest wood, the hunter
 Wanders alone, content at midday,
 And in silence trees' growth is audible,
 The sap-filled trees of the Ister,
 Which almost seems to flow backwards.
 And therefore, it
 Must come from the East
 I think, there could be much to say of this:
 Why it clings so steep to these hills
 And the other, the Rhine, runs off sideways;
 Not idly do rivers cross through where it is dry.
 And yet how? -- a sign is needed
 And nothing other, simply,
 Bearing the sun and moon, both, in mind,
 Inseparable, not divided:
 That it go forth day and night,
 That the heavenly feel the warmth from each other.
 Therefore are such the joy of the Highest.
 How otherwise come down to us here?
 Like Hertha, the green one, they too, children of the sky
 And yet too patient this one appears, and not free,
almost a jest
 For when the day comes in youth, from which he begins,
to grow,

Another drives forth in splendor there already;
Yet it needs splitting the rock, the earth has need
of the furrow,
And no habitation unless one stay;
Yet what the river does now no one knows.

(adapted from Holderlin)

[I celebrate now the death of Harold Bloom...]

I celebrate now the death of Harold Bloom,
whenever it should come –
racist ideologue, religious bigot,
and neo-fascist scum.
Not that I believe for one minute
that he sexually harassed that stupid girl,
but rather that he represented
an absolute nadir of dishonesty –
type for the age –
of the morally degenerate academic swine;

Obscurantist pomposity emitted from his person
like clouds of sewer gas, his writing flowing
copiously like diarrhetic stool,
like urine from a catheter;
his mouth resembling an anus in a way,
or fish-like perhaps, some kind of bottom feeder,
a carp or bullhead, let us say.
And yet, unlike a fish,
he would merely contaminate a compost heap.
His stench would be too much for any grave yard, surely.
Therefore, burn him.

[Gulf oil catastrophe...]

Gulf oil catastrophe, in the year 2010 –
the Gulf almost destroyed
the whole north eastern end of it
a dead zone, as they say,
like the moon's Sea of Fertility;
the gulf stream itself altered, poisoned –
an unimaginable crime, the first
of what might be
a century of unimaginable crimes,
dwarfing those of the twentieth century
as its did those of the nineteenth.

Family of Origin

Children can't be raised
by children disguised
in the bodies of adults,

nor yet by ignorant
and crass barbarians,
and mentally disturbed as well.

Long the consequences –
years, years long. Woe to the one
who comes from such a place.

Still Training in Later Life

An empty hand!

The supreme limit!

The way of harmony and the gentle way!

How great, how incredible it is that we have them,
how much we owe to the great masters of the past!

And yet how I am so changed now, diminished.

And yet – keep trying.

And we may still crawl through our embers.

Evening in Earliest Summer

Above my window,
silhouettes of trees, darkening:
radiantly dimming sky of evening.

Street sounds from outside –
and the noise of insects already, in mid-May.

WINTER AND SUMMER

WINTER

I

The night
 of cold wind
 with snow on roofs,
the walk ways window-paned with powder
 gray blue and dim or pewter
 under the burnt-out street lights

The full moon
 white and sharply luminous
 above the black brushes of the trees around
trees long leafless, stiff and straight in the freezing wind –
 and the faint points of stars
 set up in their precise lines and planes
 millions and millions of years past

Smallness of the human hands around a face,
 smallness, fragility – and so curious –
and the warmth of a hand
 on that same face, startling perhaps

Inside the man walking
 there is a coal that burns
 that he carries within,
inside the burning coal
 there is a child
 still in its magma

The winter night makes a thermal image
 of him and around him
and he appears as a lit match in darkness borne along –
 Morse code of light blinkings
 smeared to a strand of smoke

Smoke of my breath
 beneath a rush of pouring moonlight
 burning white of scooped up snow
that melts as wet ashes through numbed fingers –
 a quicksilver, cold –
 stung with a burning emptiness

I smear them up and down along my chest,
 drawing on myself, drawing to myself,
the talismans, insignia of night, the place of changes.

II

Space heater

prickling the silence

gurgle of water in a heated bowl,
with faint rising steam

The bedroom door
is left ajar
to currents of night air

III

Long days of illness,
months –

now drawn to years,
countless repeated efforts to maintain the infinite –
narrowed, hard, mysterious:
the deeper effort
to maintain the one.

IV

I am a poet, it is true,
 and one might hope
that it will all be somewhat amusing,
 a little bit amusing,
 to any who might somehow be susceptible

And yet the real artist
 is the one who made your back –
porcelain sand dunes of your shoulder blades,
the rosary of small raised beads
 that is your spine,
the flex of your muscles like
 a leaf print in the shadows

And yet the real artist is the one
 who made your ribs and your breast bone;
the real artist, the one who made your hips and your belly,
the one who made your arms and your legs
 and your shoulders

The real artist is the one who made your breasts
 and your nipples, almost the color of dark amber,
and yes, the real artist is the one who made your neck
 and your throat,
your eyes and your mouth, your breathing
and your precious spontaneous living –

And then your thoughts – indescribable, spontaneous –
 and your very living and moving –
 incommensurable these with any other thing at all –
your being itself incommensurable with anything at all,
and this means, therefore, priceless

V

For the feast of All Souls
in the year Two Thousand and Thirteen:

I and the spirits around
are gathered here,
in the darkness of the later year,
in anticipation of a renewed year.

For the feast of All Souls
in the year
Two Thousand and Thirteen,
I and the spirits around
are gathered here.

VI

Sails on the water
 one sail
 at the very edge of sight
where horizon meets horizon
 blue with white
 burning blue of water
 and a vague hazy sky

A few other sails
 here and there
 points too far away to have a color
 --are they even really there? –
 and yet one knows they are
 on the glittering expanse of the lake
the slate gray of the far shore almost more a thought

burning light, pure light,
 calm light of comprehension

Luminous
 island
 of vision and of thought
radiant for me still –
 comforting, provocative –
 moments of vision and of fascination
 however far in the past
still present in the mind
 even in this dim room now
 in the middle of this winter

VII

Knowledge of –
 and when,
 or how do we have it?
 when did I?
holding your bare chest tight against my own
 in the far days of our lives
 now lost, now gone forever
and so far remote
 so utterly and deeply lost

Who was it there
 in the ivory pallor of the lamp,
her own pallor of nakedness luminously revealed
 who was it there and when?
And yet it was you surely,
 it was you and it was me

 --you I have not seen for forty years
 and I who am so changed

Changed and yet not changed –
 but what is knowledge?
 touching the undeniable presence,
however grasped and held

I cannot stop now
 thinking of you, remembering,
 writing this.
I cannot help but have,
 and yet cannot relive,
what has been absolutely lost.

VIII

Illness in the winter
 confined to a narrow room

When will floodings of the spring break through
 floors of the snow clouds:
 -- slate blinds
low gray muslin clouds filled with snow

Fire, sun, sun and fire
 are being forged on anvils
 deep inside the earth:
 far in the cosmos itself, they do this –

A new world, new seasons,
 with their luminous skies and clouds
streaming with light rivers

IX

As I get into bed at night
 and roll onto my side,
crossing my arms before my chest,
 crossing my ankles upon each other
 --my most comfortable position –
I do not think of my previous lovers,
 the women I have held tight to myself
 or on whose chest I've rested my head
 listening to their breathing
 feeling the rise and fall of their breast

But rather of the spirits
 of the great thinkers,
 writers, philosophers, path breakers,
those who have left an image
 of their mind and soul,
their spirit, their voice itself
 —inexplicably – in their pages

And I feel that I am able
 to commune with them, to know them,
 to feel their presence,
 to have them somehow inside of me.
And I take indestructible comfort –
 a mysterious, bright encouragement – from this.

X

Christ splits apart
the Virgin –
 like an orange
breaking through its skin,

The acrid sweet fragrance
 seeping out
 through the pores
 of a leathern missal.

Christ the blood orange
 split into many sections
is yet one perfume
 in an alluring darkness.

The invisible God
 so many, yet still somehow one,
streams through the human
 and yet blossoms beyond.

XI

Holy Advent

and the time draws closer to the shortest day,
closer to the longest night –
images of seasons spent
are candle smoke that drifts away.

That time when all eternity
shall enter temporality,
that time before
come back again once more.

Star light and
snow light
over the dark earth,
the half lit town.
The snow paths glimmering like dim sand
are difficult to walk in,
just like sand.

And still more snow is coming down,
closing around the multiplying night
that leads now to a single birth
which puts to death the reign of sin –

Newness absolute,
unconditional and pure,
there on the horizon.

Light of a single star,
newness absolute – not
reform, not revolution,
since these things too are from the world of men.

XII

Beneath the snow
 there is the seed,
within each seed
 there is a sun.

XIII

Although it was too
 short a time
 too long ago,
I think of you just the same –
 can't let it go.

Although it was just such a brief
 sort of thing – still,
 how many times in life
can you have something
 so beautiful, so bright, so living?

XIV

You are the sun of my winter,
 and running my hands
 up and down your legs,
I become aware of this so clearly.

And in between your legs
 there is the source
 of warmth and light – it is a dark light,
out of which the purely luminous
 may emerge on earth,
 the human form itself.

You are the sun of my winter,
 and I know this still more clearly
 as I trace the outline of your hips
 and run my fingers
 over the rondure of your abdomen:
surely there is something
 hidden inside of you
 --and it is your mind, your soul –
that is the secret of your beauty.

XV

Burning winter

and the cold has dried the air:
stark clarity so hard and bright –
like crystals, salt, or even fire itself –

possesses the wide air, possesses the world now,
possesses the heavens, the earth,
the black earth turned to a kind of stone –

a sharpness to all objects,
light like a blade –

the bare black trees, the street, the glittering curbstone,
some scattered orange fragments of brick –

the starkness of all objects now,
the very space around them itself crystallized –

light glare on the panes of ice
that tile the parking lot where I walk by –

pale winter light across the abraded surface of the world,
scoured with freezing rain
then with blizzard winds.

With my half frozen hands and face
I am walking into the sunlight –
pale cold burning light down low near the horizon
black with winter trees,
like a camp fire in an empty wilderness.

In the middle of the day,
an empty and silent day of the weekend,
 in the middle of my walk,
my solitude grows deeper,
 a kind of fated privacy around me,
 or so I imagine it might be.

Yet it is only my own face I see
 in the windows of empty store fronts
or here and there the windshield of a parked car.

Still pale blue of sky
 just cleared of gray clouds
 holding snow –

The air so cold
 there's something foreign in every breath.

Whited asphalt of the road that shines in a new light
 showing brightly gray
near the deserted construction site,
 frills of snow along its edges –
dark facades like burnt cubes of the buildings stark
 around the empty square.

The world has grown so cold
 there is something radiant in every breath,
 something like an aura;
there is something of aspiration and defiance
in the man who walks out in the middle of the winter.

XVI

At night I lie down in my bed,
adjusting the bed sheets
underneath me and around me –

and I think of my body lying in the grave,
my dead body or my skeleton after that,
a framework of bones that has been left behind.

All of that has nothing to do with me, none of that is me.

The thing that I am is what is writing to you now

the thing that I am is not a thing –

The thing that I am
there is no word for, no term for,
no expression captures it,
though yet it is the source of all expression,
the thing that I am is the source of all description

but yet itself can never be described.

XVII

Sometimes it is called the mind,
the self the subject
many terms are known
and for long ages it was called the soul
ages longer than anyone can know

The thing that I am is not a thing,
and yet is speaking to you now, is thinking of you now

And yet who are you?
Who are you, reader, and where do you belong?

What is the road by which you've come to be
where and as you are, just as you are?

To be known by the others is necessary, and yet inevitable;
for to be for the others, and for oneself as well,
is yet the same thing.

One is, and must be, for oneself
in the depths; and for the others in the heights.

And it is necessary to have both depths and heights.

XVIII

Impossible to enumerate
 all the places and situations
 where I might see you,
 might find you amid the scenes that stamp
the true nature of your character, of your life,
 upon the world

The stamp of the bright sun of morning,
 of the recession and dim lights of evening.
In the dusk, the surface of the world
 is like something graven.

Incarnadine the light of sunset; luminous rust of sunrise;
 the sun's hinge opening beyond the black hills.

In the midst of these – your time!

Acknowledge in yourself the glory
 – incommensurable with anything else,
 this narrow aperture for the infinite –
that is in you

Acknowledge the identity that you have and are,
 that only you are and have and must be
 – supreme responsibility
 within an infinite delimitation,
supreme responsibility and yet supreme power
 – to know that which is real.

XIX

I do not fear death:

I will be dead,
and there will be nothing left.

Yet
my responsibility remains,
when all else
that I was is gone.

I do not fear death –
nothingness, non-existence –
these things must be acknowledged.

SUMMER

I An Evening in Early Summer

In the dimming light
of my bedroom,
the lamp not on
--outside, copper and green light of this June evening
when I am late starting
--it is June 18th --
to describe the season as it is,
as it appears to be

How light opens its broad blue field through the daytime sky
breaking apart the clouds,
burning through them at their edges

how high and how intensely blue
the June sky at its deepest depth,
such vertigo as I stare up into it

the concave bowl where bright lit cumulus clouds
float toward peripherally seen curved edges
that burn a vague, a dusty white –

infinity of sky, of clouds and light,
held in my mind
within my dimming room

II An Afternoon in Late June

The leaves, the bushes all
 are cracking open with the light –
 sunlight opening through them
as the wind is active around

Heat blur of day,
 hazed over the waiting trees,
 something building in summer's atmosphere,
something is tuning itself
 to something else in the light

There is mystery in growth,
 the inexplicable in light itself,
 in day itself, in time

Sitting in the sun
 my shadow tilted on bright concrete white as quartz,
 I turn the pages of my book,
 hand shadow moving with me

What is building in the world,
 inside the day
 inside the mind?

What is working through me
 as I sit here
 soaking light? –
touching a bright page,
 hearing the day around me,
 feeling the bright sun
 hearing my own thought

III **Night in the Back Yard**

Deep blue and India ink of sky

intricate needlepoint of dim constellations
held up by rough black velvet of horizon trees

Looking up into a pool, a portal,
looking far into the past –
light-crystal of space-time
formed now around me here

Striking a bright match –
held in my hand,
pale illuminated palm and fingers
like a shell,
a beating heart –
an ear listening

Tide of living time,
blood of earthly passageways –
pulse and dim vibration
and yet a bright attunement,
this living existence
infinitely small

A fragile thing
burning quickly,
petals of flesh and bone
warmed more slowly
though fingertips themselves
already burnt
are holding their light

And I drop it quickly
to the dark damp grass –
looking up,
bright circles around my sight

IV Harvest

I am coming toward you again
as I move toward the later season,
I who streamed once
from the source where you must be

Layer on layer –
breaking from the many coverings,
leaf upon leaf –

dry leaves crumble away
inside the brushing palm
that strips the dry sheaf of basil from its bush

Or kernels of small grain –
stony, grit-like, whitened, and hard
these later bits of a harvest –
let them fall somewhere

and they will fall somewhere

V The Skies

Blue fields of light
 these skies so full of space
 they bend it toward us here

Below
 we await their lightning,
 their suns that come and go
 and their storms of rain and wind
 above these still

 the steady and luminous blue --
 un-delimited oceans where the clouds are ships,
 white trails of sea lanes
 faintly apparent – here, there

Skies,
 you are the threshold
 where earth
 and all the universe beyond the earth are met,
 a joining as of a lens and light

I remember as a boy
 holding the sun of an afternoon
 deep inside the half sphere of a magnifying glass
 burning a hole through newsprint,
 a smoking worm hole bored
 through dusty days and weeks

What forces are aligned now
 inside the days passing on? –
above the printed landscapes, marked and graded
 mountains,
 broadest ocean fields, green and tawny plains,
above the cities, suburbs, towns and villages,
 crowded with new pages and with old pages

VI Shadow Bars

Light filtering through
 wind with its shadow leaves
printing the window
 of translucent amber light cubes
 held in a basket weave
 of shadows,
 these shadow bars

Light is its own window, its own wall

 See built here, now, the light's own structures

Hands of the burning enigma –
 glory of new dimensions, possibility,
 potential of the teeming concepts,
 the radiant forms of thought

What new worlds
 nearly present here
 disclosed, unrecognized?

--burgeoning of infinite forms
 inside a window pane:
 the conception of new Being,
 or beings –
to accompany the angels that are standing there –

 the new men and women

VII Those Not Yet

You the unknown
 who will, who must come after –
 who are you?
Where?

In my thought still as yet
 or in the thoughts of others,
 or in the day outside?

Forms of the clouds building high over the fields,
 the hills in the near distance
illuminated with the sharp warm afternoon sun

A sun as though nearly full, nearly filled
 with something—
 but with what?

How strangely light so often seems a substance
 or even a living thing

What living beings
 living minds are implied there?
 perhaps even now somehow there,
 but where?

--waiting for permission to step down to us,
waiting for consent to be given within a thought
 or in a rising impulse:
 wind through the trees
touching at leaves, touching everywhere
 those in the day and those not yet

VIII Whose Was the Face?

Sitting in the evening in my room alone
I wonder of my life going by me
even as I sit here

And it has been both fast and slow it seems –
the enormous labor of the years
at moments grasped with some brief images,
images merely
that flash through the mind like tricks of light in a window
or linger a moment

How long I have lived I sometimes think –
is it possible it really has been thirty years
since I walked on certain streets?

How I remember the look, the feel,
the scent of the air –
at a particular corner near a house
I still can visualize so clearly

The night breeze shifting the dark leaves of the trees,
the moon beyond at moments glinting through,
the feel of the sidewalk underneath my feet
as I stand there, the clothes that I am wearing –

the look of my own face caught by chance
in an odd reflecting surface –
a storefront window, the windshield of a parked car

Whose was that face? whose was that life so long ago,
so briefly there, so quickly past?—
and yet still with me somehow

IX A Later Statement

I am listening as my thought
 moves toward you
 though I do not hear as yet
 what I am listening for

--or do I nonetheless?

Where was I bound for
 when diverted somehow
 for some reason
 into this place below –

 tell me the reason,
 show me somehow

It has been long
 yet strangely brief –
a flash bulb of light
 in a single face,
 my face –
I have been dazzled nearly blind

 by sun and wind, by rain,
 indeed by all seasons

and at times by others moving about me here
 through these dark currents,
 their hands reaching, searching

I am moving onward myself,
 like them –
leaves of the river parted against its streaming grain,
 beaded as with star points
 streaming in rain and darkness, in light itself

I refuse to crouch in the rushing,
 I refuse to crawl or bend –
 I hope that all will understand me –

I am moving forward

For You

Everything I have written
I have written for you
I hope that you like it

Now
As you read it,
after you read it,
think of me sometimes

Remember —

I was once like you,
young and
living,
striving

NOVUS

Novus

Before the wet dawn
and wind still

Sharp light cracking open
between globes of the black hill fissure
wind so active in darkness

The hour not still,
and the air's dim cataracted lens
pricked by light's splinter

Among dark rippling leaves
glowing streaks of light's weirs
their hinges opening above in the distance

sluices foaming gold at the black sill

And the open sky – skies now, skies – purpled,
and huge
stars fading in the aurora, in the green

The air stirring now through wet grass,
the wide empty surface wind across miles and miles

And now a damp earth scent
of cold water somewhere
sparkled with a final bit of green starlight

Somewhere

Somewhere

but where

in the depths of the bell

leaves

my thoughts

at evening

gathered

unspoken

Cold grass night's silence

footprints in the dirt

where am I going, where

am I going?

and now how much longer?

Illumination

Mind

streams of crystal

through

points planes geometries

of

light and fire

stilled distilled
intricate ice droplets
like lace

of skies, of dimensions

burning bright winter
so pure

light with all of light

ever, ever and

always

Autumn's Moon

Moon

lit dark leaves

near silent night wind

going where? – feel, listen –

tell

the night wind unresting

dark substance stirring
stirred

shiver beneath your skin

among leaves
and stars

Interior

Placard of dusty light
on floor

this giant form
of day

a whole sky

fallen through these cracks
of blinds
at a pulled string

how unaccountable

this accident of a sky and sun
held within a small room

A Tree

Thought

lacey flickering
the broad shade
the maple canopy so high

its green dear-spotted light
with spring seeds floating
light green, and winged twirling down

soft light sparking yellow
beyond in the day

Now apparition

somewhere above essential
somewhere
stepping from bough to bough

down from an unseen blue

The Early Summer

May blossoms

the dark stirs
the white petals
rain left in the grass

and we are young
looking searching
where to go?
alone, together

Where?

what will happen,
and when?

This moment

inhale it, the air so fresh and clean
the sky so deep, filled with stars –
are they slightly pink?
like the seeds in blackberry jam –
so dense so intricate and so many

Where can we go, to do what?
What *can* we do?

Take my hand

this moment –
in anticipation

walking wandering forward into the darkness

your loose skirt rippling like a flame in the night's breeze

That Day, Midwinter

I know the way
but do you
but I think, know
you do

Winter snow fields
brilliant, steaming

the sun melting a glaze over them

diamond pointed surface of light
with a nearly gold aura just above
haunting around
yellow circled white sun
nearly a blindness
yet so bright

silent the still air, of no wind
breath, our breath smoke, went straight up in it
in air filled merely with light
itself seeming stilled

on that midday

you and I having walked there
standing there

when where
so strange that moment as though out of time
as though out of all our normal life

what did we say?

Late Spring

May so shining
 the newly green trees
still cracking porous open with sunlight
 not yet totally filled with leaves
 leaves still fresh green
 not dusted over as yet

Blue
the sky the perennial robin's egg
 so sunny white the clouds

 not even too high
medium cumuli floating edge lit
 one might almost touch

And the late spring sun

the whole afternoon something casual breezy as yet,
 as it just starts to grow into summer

seeking then toward
 the murmuring hot stillness

 of each silent noon

Late Spring Night with Rain

Dark blossoms the elderberry purple black
dark blossoms this night full of rain
fragrant with new grass
dripping cool from broad leaves

yet in the dark come out
by moon light to see and breathe
taste the new fallen rain in the air

midnight

drawing inward
grass rain leaves and wet black dirt of a garden
only just opened itself
a new one just started

hot beds too laid out blocked in
with old gray slats six inches deep in dirt
an old wooden windowpane door
set across them to gather the sun

But my back door gathers the moon now

the back yard full of garden and rain storm fragrance
inhabiting moonlight and star light

Vertigo of Wonder

No form of radiance

through the sky this light

it is everywhere, it is everything

palpable impalpable
visible beyond visible

the eye itself the breath, spirit –
your feeling reaching up so high

vertigo of wonder
in a vortex of spinning around desire

I am here, I want all of this
but how, where?

Now the moment always,
and always the mind questioning
the heart striving, the hand searching

What is the world? you think

what is reality? what is being?

A Rainy Afternoon

More rain still, will it ever end?
over and over down the pane

see the mist world in its glass
and in the streams still bright reflections

air of chill spring
as the water soaks everywhere

this old unpainted wood here of such an old house
garden scent too on the air from out back
as I open the window more
to get more breeze, more water spray and rain light
the bright drops dripping from the trees' leaves outside

so beautiful, so fresh, so wonderful
I want to open the whole house wide

The Strange Sunset

Traffic noise of evening
 echoing far beyond
 the horizon's light

 and beneath the noise, a silence

 as though of sunset itself:

 conflagration
consummation of the world at its very edge
 nearly burnt through –

 but why is there no sound?

Silences echo instead

 upward through purpling

 yellow green staining the edges
 lower down
 the blood so evident
 the blood stain

sunset blazing

 and silent

Remnants

Open, then close

put away
the welcoming light
now I close my eyes,
it is silent

burgeoning of wind sound
 is there laughter as well?

hands reaching out toward me
or else outward from me
who can say?

among these remnants of a kingdom

now the remnants of days

Night Sky

Night cistern
star flecks

no wind, no wind now

floating lily pads of stars

the dark constellations

slowly opening

here now

night blooming cosmos

After Heavy Rain

All day

rain rising in mist

silent with traffic sounds whooshing through
the cool afternoon

branches of the tree outside my door

blossoms white in a half moon on the grass so thick
almost blue green

light heavy white flakes
of fallen petals
some on the sidewalk
like pink confetti

the concrete sidewalk
darkly wet

Depths

Streams blossoming

underworld

underground
searching
building depth

the depths

reaching the
foundations

beautiful, the
Beautiful

underground the sun

daylight
of the earth

there, the sources

Out Back in the Garden

Digging up the garden in the spring –

clear like water the midday air
 with cicada wing patterns of rain light
 still amid wind washed leaves
if you look, squinting your eyes a little
 or maybe it's just a bit of salt perspiration
 forming there as you work,
 at the rim of your gaze

 bright the still slate gray dirt in the light
but turn the spade over in v-shaped cups
 digging in
and it will turn out black to the sun

 afternoon light through breeze pulsing trees
a pink white webbing of shine through the apple tree
 in our neighbor's yard
(a small crab, it's not worth much but still it is there,
 in the light yellow circle of grass
 in the sun shine) –

a small child runs from the house, his tee shirt so white,
 his arms spread wide, shouting

Bright Window, Dark Curtains

You here amid dark drapery

And I follow
these bright streams – around
 illusion's paths, these
the indented waves of shadows branching
 across your bare chest –

edges of sun glare, the dust sparkling

before the blinds' sieve of sunlight

 still in your cloak of shadows

 Stay only a bit longer

 but stay

 before
the final change

 and the shadows no longer crossable

Moonlit Water

Steadiness of the bright moon above
 and the broken paths of sparkling light
 toward it

if we could walk there

 out to the end of the night
 into the depths of the wave

even though there is only one wave
 even though there are many

many, the waves of the water, the dark water, the light

much, so much
 the light-haunted rippling
 the delicate lace of foam
 dissolving chains of foam

so much and so many

if only

At the Window in the Afternoon

The open window
no glass now, no screen
a kind of hole right through the wall,
curtain a light green

The day beyond

the daylight moon a powdery thumb print
green trees washed through with wind
sun beginning to sharpen,
to burn through
warm air full of the sun's heat warming even this
wooden sill right here by my elbow
which is a bit dusty and smells of old flaking paint,
red brown
along with the wood itself, a slightly blackish gray
the scent of flowers and of grass
faint when the breeze is blowing through
but heavier, hotter when it stills
day so absolutely there
there here
everywhere

Earliest Morning

Sun rise
burning through night char

thin flame like alcohol
or faintest butane
streaking up

Rising sun dark red
light streaming hills

ember light

cosmic purple of deep sky,
auroras of indigo and green

star-sparks blown away
from the eruption of light

from the eruption of light on earth

Windy Evening in Late Autumn

Tree breaks in the distance flooded with dark and wind,
with snow-coming wind
crossing the brown field, chasing the brown hay grass –
purple bruised clouds,
graphite wings of low thunderheads

Trees, books of unwritten words,
hand full clutches of straw, waving

red sunset light is almost brown,
field path soft under my shoe sole
damp from sleet
the air is clean and fragrant, windy and harsh –
chilled essence of rain and old grass, old leaves,
new snow coming, but not just yet

dim radiant beauty of evening, autumn evening,
stark cold and beautiful

rough and austere beauty but filled with light

as deep water is filled with light sometimes

or night with detail of star needlepoint

Cars passing on the bridge up ahead as I walk back into
town from being out so long beyond the hill, the far
back roads

Hello, all my friends, hello

The Evening Fires

Autumn fires burning up the garden
tangle of summer's plants
charcoal smelling air
smoky air so full of the earth
as it is changing into something beyond the earth

as it is harvest now, as it is changing
crossing the deep threshold,
so deep and yet seen nowhere,
seen nowhere and yet felt, sensed in this air, this scent

Trees so full of unearthly light,
a light of something other, something beyond instead

they are, and are not
but are more –
fields so full of a haunted, haunting emptiness

fields of harvest shorn of their crests,
their once radiant gold and green,
empty, bereft now of merely earth,
full now of something else

Soon the indigo sky deep black, sky with crystalline
gateways of the of stars

sky so deep yet streaming on and on

And so far below,
the smoke of autumn fires streaming into
the distances of evening

Sidewalk After Night Rain, with Wind

Night tunnel of twisting and striated trees, striving
swept branches
illuminated

bright silent moonlight
vortex of wind trees surging above and around the
wet street

the leaves so flurried rushing silver, green, and white

branches whose shadows are wind veins, wind arteries
pulsing in the heartbeat of the gale

moonlight gold flaking the tree's visage,
these small bright lights fixed in its dark hair

the sidewalk's lozenges of miraculous bronze,
so wet and so shining

shadows of wreathed entanglements
filled with, bending with, the weight of a cosmic argosy

Sitting Out by the Garage

Dirt in my hand
a handful as I sit here on the wooden bench
made of cast off plywood
set across old bricks

grass windy before me full of dandelions

still cool the dirt,
holding it
right from this orange flower pot

still thin and clear the light
the sky so blue above
low lily pads of clouds
lit gray along their edges as the sun shines
beyond them

dirt under my finger nails, dirt itself
placed back in its pot

Growth is from the whole, the total –
unhidden, unmysterious

so well and yet so poorly understood

In the Garden

In the garden
the sun is brought down to the earth,
brought to embrace the earth
the rain, the air itself, the wind

In the garden
the day is brought into another landscape of time,
it is called the future

In the garden the moment Now
is made to gather into itself,
expand out from itself
into the blossom Then –

Then which is of the past, Then which is of the future

In the garden the labor of the gardener becomes
effortless, for the garden itself is still

And there the effort of the gardener becomes all rest
itself, the rest that is not sleep and is not death,
but it is called the Good

The Good that then is heard beckoning in the steady
heat of day, in the bright whisper of the light,
in the murmur of the silent noon

Blue Evening

Blue the evening light
and the low hills so darkly green
against the horizon's black silhouette,
crimson auras through the hill tree fissures

Down along the river the air is more damp,
as though by an exhalation from the stream itself

Ancient the ground around us now, the ancient river
with its history far beyond what we know of

Wood smoke in the air, the chimneys are starkly black
against the sky of cornflower blue
that goes so deeply on, so richly on –

a richness of space so filled with the light of space
and with the spaces of the light

We are in the cemetery now, the many graves,
the elaborate mausoleums, the whole so dark

Walking through the many leaves fallen around,
poplar leaves stiff and flakey rustling, the ground hard,
and the grass burnt with frost

A low wall of stone that rings the cemetery,
old fieldstone, beautiful, and patched with mortar

The late sun follows us through the evening,
as the white moon will follow us through the night

The Renewal

Why are you here so early, ancient man?

revisiting, re-seeing,
and yet to see again is still to see
to know and to know better

rain of the early morning not yet dried

small trees around the yard filled with subtle
movements of the morning air
not really wind, not even a breeze, but wakening

not light, not even day yet, and therefore less and more
than light – renewal

breathing here not that of sleep, not yet of the stress of
day and labor, therefore something other,
something else

but what?

a spider-webbing mist on grass there by the garage,
near the low wall

water, air, and light – all, the other versions of
themselves, the stranger ones

birds not yet quite wakened slightly singing,
not yet entirely song

but what?

Hear the water

dripping down from leaf to leaf
with tapping sounds, inaudible perhaps, but hear

breathe the earliest air, just before day, the scent of
earth and dampness, breathe, this, not merely air
but time

feel what is new – the renewal – and its powers

Last Hour of Sunset

Furnace ledge of the distant hill, furnace mouth
its lips nearly sealed above the setting sun

birds flock in black trees,
dark wind-agitated leaves
and the grass is cold now

What is leaving?

Charcoal the trees beyond, dim gray house fronts

deep green sky above
collapsed burnt skylines

clouds
scorched with light

still floating in a tinted darkness

The Arbor Late at Night

[illegible]

light and dark patterns
shadow leaves, shadow stems and shadow vines
illuminated brown
sepia, silver
on the wood of the bench

shadows plume-like, cloth-like, rag-like wavering
on the grass
the bench hacked up, dark green

fissures of black sky
 splinter street lights
 spots of starlight – mint, violet, silver, mauve
 the colors of the stars, barely visible,
 mysterious

Shapes, presences, patterns of darkness and of light
around this solitude

outside, passages of wind and night
somewhere

Midsummer Field

Midsummer and the field is raked with light
clouds piled high like columns floating
turning in sunrays
then drifting forward
like mile high white sails

light green grass, dark green waves of the wind
pools and eddies with and against the grain

Sky of burning blue windswept, high and deep
so blue that it seems painted there
so deep as to be almost unsearchable

yellow white hot sun
the almost white horizon

and yet the wind is slightly cool around me

Trees pulsing in liquid sun heated air
full of bright streaks,
the spark-cracking crumbling tree coral reef
along the gray side road
where I will be walking after I cross the field
with its nearly waist high grass and its steady currents
of the summer wind

The Garden in Bright Day

Leaves of the white blooming peas
tangled green vines, so thick and wound around
each other and the crossed wooden stakes,

fragrant, smelling of sun and the warmed earth

white pea blossoms filled with light,
a translucent skin
nearly impossible to touch it is so delicate

when you do it seems to stiffen,
shrink, and then cling, and curdle –

so delicate the woven beautiful,
this so exquisite a skin –
as any skin must be
membrane between one living thing,
living dimension – world – and then another –
shaded by leaves

beneath a vertigo of sky –
sky turning around with sun, spinning through it,
turning the day, the world around
the wooden framework,
the crossed bamboo poles with heavy vines
and curious clinging leaves, heart shaped

and the white pea blossoms randomly dispersed
slightly rippling in wind
shining in the light

The Grass

The grass
 deeper than earth itself, the grass
 darkness and water
 with a green sun of light
 merged with the water
 gathered, gathering

as though of ricks of hay
 as though of bushels of apples
 baskets of peaches, pears
 eggs white and brown
the pouring out of golden grains
 corn and barley, wheat and rye
of the autumn leaves so beautiful
 burning up, yet beautiful

At the Edge of Town

At the edge of the town
I see the bridge across the river
in the sunset's light –
burning gold sparkling on the cold water in the bend of
the river

The brush-like bare trees of gray and brown
the dark green firs and pines nearly black
at the edge of the hill lines bordering the river banks

the space around them, above them
filled with pink light
and the rocks there are deep blue
the sandy shore is like an amber pelt
and the rocks are shining graphite or a wet brilliant slate

How beautiful, I wish I could look at it for hours and
hours

It is late afternoon, November, very cold
and a bright wind freezing

cold sky of burning light, of orange and green
and higher up there is a deepest blue with faint
constellations becoming visible

Breathe, breathe the moment now
so cold so clean and clear
the mind the body
wakened in the sharpness of light and air and color

Movement of the traffic across the bridge
and the headlights slice past me
but not through me

they cannot see me
I am a dark shape at the edge of the bridge
and yet not dark, and yet not at the edge

At my left hand the hills, the infinite
lightening and yet darkening sky
with crystalline figures, the artifice of stars

At my right hand
the roofs of the town dark
and shining with a glaze of ice

Before me the river flowing out into its turning
into the night beyond

And the others now, the strangers
surging with such power
from one side over to the other,
the brilliant diamond drills of headlights

Where are we going, though? Where am I, and why?

And where are they all going?
where are they coming from?

Who are they?

The Road and the Sky

Walking ten miles this afternoon far outside of town
warm sunlight so hot on my shoulder
my arms and face are sunburnt

sweating under my light shirt
the blue sky almost whited out with white yellow sun

I feel the loose shards of gravel under my shoe
as I walk along the shoulder of the old back road
the cracked asphalt is burning up ahead like heated tin
gravel so sharp and bright
almost no shadows now

Above, the sky
only a bit of blue faint cirrus way high up wisped along
a gauzy haze on the hills around

cicadas in the deep field burning in the heat

What Winter of Brilliant Light

What winter of brilliant light –
perhaps it is more than sun
and more than day

what space so bright
illuminated startling and clear,
and perhaps it is more than space

See the luminous coherence and yet separateness
within the simultaneity
of a given moment
now

and yet not even now, but also after and before –
coherence beyond coherence,
consequential, grave

this is to be, to live

Now out walking in the cold and snow –
take off the glove –
no coverings, no evasion

See the mere light upon a living hand

Deep Light

Noon so absolutely bright,
as though there could be
nothing more beyond this transparent air,
beyond or beneath the nearly solid blue

not even any clouds, not one

The field around me stirs
and sifts through its own thin shadows,
the air itself searches in its waves of heat

ripples of yellow grass, ripples of light green grass
meander

But now the stillness of the hottest hour
now the deeper presences
within apparent absence, emptiness

and the air is filled with them

scarcely any shadows

light strengthening its hold everywhere

The Unseen Form

It is only that this light and warmth,
 this unseen form
 that is yet so visible in the air

is like a kind of image of desire itself –

 the desire that I feel for you
because it is without form
 and therefore has no end

because it has no definite place
 and yet is inescapably there
 real, palpable
because it is invisible
 and yet true

And indeed it may be
 the invisible itself
 as that can be a power in our lives,
 or it is the ineffable mystery – existence –
as that has just consented to take given form
 in a particular place
 and in a given time

And yet what is the given, and the given time?
 we have to wonder –

 dreamed woman
 so endless
as you were nearly known
 as you were nearly found

Mysterious Night

Moonlight and the wind is
still restless after the rain

Bats skimming the wet humid air
erratic, purposeful
silent yet voluble in their own realm

Darkness
felt around, cool and damp

the midnight chill

Sitting here
pushing all disquiet away,
the infinity of its shapes
times, contexts –
voluble darkness
of the unseen
so close around, leading far away
into unknown presences
not merely absence
always unsuspected perhaps and yet
here, around
never not around

An Afternoon

Light cracking through
 yellow leaves with rain,
Sound of bells through the leaves
 from the nearby tower

Wind flurried shadows in my window –
 cold autumn day,
empty small apartment
 card board boxes by the door,
a brown throw rug
 askew on a wooden floor

I listen to the traffic sounds
 on the street outside
I am alone here

 mid-day, mid-week idleness

Some Ice Leaves

In the frozen puddle

see the autumn leaves
 through a misted-over pane

fine shards of glass,
 the veins and spines

now sun crystals

 these spread veins of light,
 yet water still

The green world
 burns in frost smoke,
in breath smoke

But When?

Eyes closed asleep, yet not
 listening
 and you are here

thoughts full of light,
 thoughts full of dark

feel the day with its streams of sunlight
 and yet you are in the light,
feel the remembered night
 with its rain
and yet you were there as well

But who were you really,
 will I ever know?

 years, seasons flowing past
tear them away from the calendar's face

where is my real life,
 where is my real love?

When? I am still asking,
 when?

A Morning

Morning sun through the rose window of dawn

tracery of trees and branches
transom of the sand bar clouds

sun-rayed pediments of hills

thick and tangled the battered-down wall of the
landscape
prone and breaking up
before the rushing in of light

Green arbor shade here at my lookout post
sunlight so gold now

the aura of peach-colored dawn
above the dark slate roofs of the town
the houses themselves gone vague
the streets flooded in glare

workers to come wake now

Wake now, people to come

Bright Spring

Morning sun on the clean spring time wall
webbed shadows of the blowing tree's branches
and their new leaves
printing the off white walls
tossing the tree's hair all around them

so much bright morning wind in my room
the window sill still wet with rain
rain storms all night with wind and lightning

Joy now, bright and awakening, the entire day, the
entire sky around
with its light and rushing flowing clouds and
the new sun –
I cannot see it now, but I can feel it

and the rain drops turned to untouchable diamonds
on the thorn points of the yellow rose bushes in the
garden outside

Mysterious Evening

Evening come in
 with breakers of gold and violet clouds
 lit crimson underneath
 with light spokes from the fallen sun

the chill and intermittent wind
 sifting through trees,
 speaking to them, whispering,
and there are other voices whispering

Why only now? as the earth tilts silently away
 from the source of light
 and only the smallest sources left –
 small points
fleeting effervescence of light
 nearly lost in infinity
 yet not lost not, not fleeting

Black columns around now
 with ragged shapes about them, hanging,
 the remnant leaves

 insinuations of night wind
 going somewhere,
 where? –

 choruses massing
 speaking choirs –
the stars not yet and yet they will be coming, the stars
 and the risen constellations

Autobiography

Asleep here and what dreams
are crowding
--I am many, I am one --
under the chill moon
so bright over me, so close and huge and white,
as I lie asleep under the hill

the roots of the pine like thick ropes twist around me
and the roots of the hemlock reach down through

mother of pearl the moon,
slightly pink
in the black sky
a sand colored moon
on a different night,
a smoky thumb print of moon
frost white at midday

now ashen light ladders through serrated leaves
of the deep elm tree,
of the maple tree,
flashing in the branched beams of the oak

Dark room of the small seat here where there is no
room
but the open night crossed by wind, by many voices,
silent, and the many stars

goodbye -- you the others,
onlookers

Farewell

Depths of thought, secrecy,
the crowned and garlanded privacy of age
facing toward an inner space,
an inner determination
remote, silent, teeming the voices,
the stars that indicate but are silent
moonrise, sunrise
and then flaming sunset
amid wind, amid rain, amid storm and calm,
all seasons
Say: sun, moon
farewell and hello
in a new attunement, a new voice
hello farewell, again
in a new time
both short and long,
infinite merely
Goodbye, my friends

Above and Below

Luminous yellow, translucent, of the vines
and more opaque the dark green
of the leaves
of the bean plants –

look,

but look again

now really look
and breathe, feel – now, here

tall bean plant and intricate peas with pale violet
flowers

skin so absolutely soft and thin
veins of an infinite lucidity and soft perfection

slight the flexing and almost a stiffening when you
touch them just lightly
very lightly

delicate cling of the green
curling
tendrils

--should they even be touched by this wooden frame
its crossed sticks, dry old dusty,
flakes of old bark adhering?

Above – the luminous torrent and the blue transit of days;
below – the twelve winds
and the suns of devastation

A Windowpane

White vines
of frost and leaves of frost
on the morning window pane
misty with fog-misted crystals
in which rainbows are also present,
elusive
mist flowers of your breath
the moon's fingerprint in the deep blue of the white
morning
flowers tingling freeze your fingertips,
the numbness then
when you touch these flowers –
streaks of water
lengthen the moment
with a reconsideration
sought in for a dreamed reflection,
a hoped-for
--this breath itself
condensation of sun and moon
beyond this transparent barrier
which yet is not transparent

Into the Night

The gathering of night, black swallows crossing and re-crossing in their realms of gold, and the earth is growing still and quieter, settling, yet the colors will not cease or be less beautiful in the burning sky

The sun is lower as though retreating past the far edge of the world, like a player stepping out of bounds, and yet it's pulling in its dragnet after it, the night coming on – luminous cloud islands, sand bars and burning strata of pink and orange, violet and mauve, faint green irised with iodine and molten brass

The fan shaped veils suffused with a violet radiance – floating weightless stepping stones always darkening, with their burning edges like wire filaments, as the islands drift in a now unearthly sky

At some point the light becomes a translucent medium, with new and visionary depths: blue is more like purple, red is more like black, and the rich deep green of the grass is dimmest amber tinted with a copper wash and pointed with the vaguest of gold floss here and there

The light is fading out – yet becoming more a presence, more pronounced as it declines. It is as though something were moving away far up ahead, vanishing into the distance, or simply dispersing; perhaps it is the world, gone now just out of reach of ear or eye, of even the hand itself, the very air is changed

The trees, now almost black, are outlined with faint yellow along the earth rim's burning edge. As you move your head or change position, bright shards and streamings, portents, through the gathering depths and black wicker-work of branches – space-charged – haunt your peripheral vision.

Through the tree scraps so near you can see, around an occasional head of gold and sparkling light, the expanding dusk-aura, the depths and the gathering dark trenches. And it is as though one heard a door closing far in the sunset.

The sounds of the street are more pronounced with twilight and the silence of the air is more still and deep, the scent of the river seems to come from far and has a foreign, pensive, and melancholy feel.

Anything that tells of time and distance brings melancholy with it at twilight; then distance is most penetrating, palpable; time most slowed, delayed.

Then, these both, though uncanny, must be taken in with every breath, and the eye now, as though definitively surprised, more open, searching, takes into itself this startling, strange element, the dimension of *afar*: an unaccustomed language is given to the mind, whose words are subtly darkened.

The people before me who, in a sense, are no longer merely people, seem to feel this as well: a kind of shiver goes through them, a change of key, and yet a quieting. It is as though each had to stand motionless in a narrow spot while vast areas of longing, light-drenched, open up around them on all sides.

Then through hundreds of indefinable adjustments
the mass breaks up into different and yet still ragged
clusters, groupings neither of design nor yet
of randomness, moving silently among the
darkening structures, in the harlequin light
Strangely, now, the people seem to have become more
active with twilight; the hum of conversation
sounds like the buzzing of a thousand bees, or as the
buzzing of a thousand bees would sound if it were
somehow silent; buildings towering in the brazen,
somber air are hives, huge and terrifying

Yet the horizon remains merely the horizon of the earth.
How many of our thoughts, even our hearing and
seeing too, arise from this experience of space, our
unsuspected awareness of the boundary, an open
and reverberant source, holding light, moving with
our moving, marked by our buildings, delineated by
the hills?

Where am I now, and where are we? Is this the east or is it
the west or is it the north or south? What is up
ahead, in the world to come?

I, the Stranger

I, the Stranger

know the secrets hidden,
yet they protect themselves
The evening sun speaks with burnt lips,
yet the secret protects itself

Broken, tangled amid crystals and frost leaves,
the light shards clash their swords
breaking across the facets of dust and amber
the burnt up fields,
cutting the rough pelt of undulating hills, slashing
through to the farther surfaces

The moon and the sun are filled with a new emptiness –
 why are they still there?
 Beautiful woman curved as the slivered moon,
 printed in layers of the parchment sheaf
 your lore,

but where are you?
Knights of the obscure and of the radiant,
hidden in darkened alleyways,
in the secret companies
your working, but how to know it?

the lucid chemicals, the messages of the obscure forms
smoldering amid dust ash
--yet the fires lead where?

I, the Stranger, my eyes see the world,
though my hands cannot touch the coals

still, I seek the new path, I seek the elsewhere

Summer Afternoon, North Country

Brilliant the day,
the sky so blue with no clouds at all
no breeze, no motion of the air, itself so absolutely clear
Here in the field there are so many odors,
a heavy still atmosphere, fragrances steeped in
sunlight –
that of the grass, the weeds,
the wild flowers dispersed around
and here the light bright green timothy
and by the road off a ways
itself gleaming dully beneath a mirror shine
there is some blue chicory
Queen Anne's lace afloat in white waves off near the
declension of a hill
and there's a railroad crossing some ways beyond,
its white arms almost invisible in bright light
the sun is almost straight above
and there are few shadows now

But Then Give

Lost you
 somewhere
 your face,
 the snow
falling lacework wind-creased

Turning now, blown through
 a veiling
These we never knew
 these the lost,
the un-blooming, unborn

Steadiness of the sky
Day closing now
 and yet the unchanging
 in the late light,
two faces closed together
 in darkness

Roots now and now deeper roots,
 the white snow so warm
Those we never knew

But then give, we must give –
 opening all
 --all and all,
to the whitened air
drifted so far from our hands

 these the blown tatters of angels

such possibility

The Living Beauty

Living beauty of the light
I would know and
 somehow touch, embrace
and comprehend it

In the sheer precision of its teeming forms
I would find clarified existence,
 ignorance of time:

Determinate, conceptual
unlimited, silent, grand –
 its inward and outward form
possession of space itself –

Space where we must be
 space that we must live and know
finding a bright coherence

holding, then to build

AFTERWORD

Encounters With the Author in Taipei

We first made the author's acquaintance at a well-known restaurant in Taipei, the Wysteria Tea House, famous as having been a meeting place for dissident intellectuals in the years of political struggle in Taiwan. During the recent effort to publish his rather extensive work, we had occasion to discuss aspects of his past and current writing.

Your poetry is quite varied in style and form. Where do you locate yourself in the overall debate concerning poetic form?

I consider myself eclectic. The main thing for me is to grasp, mentally, a certain object – that is, an experience, a scene, an event. Any language that seems to convey the reality of that is good, any which remains merely language, merely words, is negative, in the sense of being obstructive.

A cliché?

Yes or not even a cliché but in a way worse than that. Much of our language obscures the nature of reality. Words in themselves are, in a sense, the enemy of writing. I tell students that all the time. Words most often merely convey the usual accepted social understanding. Writing is for the purpose of grasping reality itself, which is always something other than the social understanding.

Do you consider yourself a political writer?

All writing is political in the sense of attempting to correct these false social understandings. At times its purpose is to

merely reveal with a new freshness, a perceptual freshness, as it were. But even this has a certain political significance, in the sense that then people may think, and then act, differently than they had before. And the results of that are unpredictable.

Does living outside the United States help or hinder your writing?

I think it helps, in general. It is in some ways a very undeveloped culture, yet in other ways it is overbearing. (The US, that is.) There is, for example, a great deal of rather stifling political correctness, as it's called, and to get away from that is itself a positive thing. For a while I had no idea how I would ever get all this material published, especially if you're not there trying to do all the "networking" that is needed, and which I was absolutely terrible at anyway – worse than terrible, I really had no clue, I still don't, I suppose. And then it came about that you could just do it all by yourself – or with a small amount of help, which I've had – by means of computers, the new printing technology, and of course the internet.

How much material is it? It's quite a lot, it would seem.

Yes, I guess it's about 40 volumes or so. Almost 3,000 pages, if you want to measure it like that. I don't know how much it would weigh.

There seem to be many styles represented. Was that something you consciously strove for?

Yes. I always wanted to be able to represent a wide variety of experiences. And that seemed to me the way to do it.

What sorts of things are you working on currently?

Well as you know I'm trying to get all this existing work published, going through it, touching it up here and there, proofreading, and so forth. After that, I think I might return to some translating work – Holderlin especially, and some Chinese poets, but don't ask me which ones.

All right, but can you say whether they are modern or classical?

Classical. My favorite is Mung Hao-Ren, actually.

There are many other things to talk about, but perhaps you could mention some of your influences.

I would just say that I think the reader will notice echoes of Dylan Thomas, Hart Crane, Keats, and others. There's Frost, about whom I wrote a short book, there's Yeats, and in particular Whitman, but also more contemporary people such as Oppen, Elizabeth Bishop, and others. I wrote four books of poems, which I called odes, partly in imitation of Larry Eigner and the French poet Pierre Reverdy. A long poem called *The Second Life of Fire* was influenced by Ashbery, but also by Breton and Heiner Muller. An early long poem called *Second World* was indebted to Blake, Shelley, and Whitman, but also to Robert Duncan, Ginsburg, and Ted Hughes, as well as Hugh MacDiarmid. My work in general seems to occupy an intersection between Surrealism and Romanticism, speaking just very broadly, a conjunction that many modern poets have worked, but in recent years perhaps rather few, at least in English.

You've written on Frost, isn't that right?

Yes, it was originally my dissertation and then was published by a small Canadian press. I wrote a short book on the American Surrealist Philip Lamantia – I knew him slightly, actually – and then I wrote a book on Elizabeth Bishop which was accepted by Rodopi, but I withdrew it because I wanted to change some things. Health problems and other things intruded. But I hope to resubmit the revised book to them again pretty soon.

As a way to conclude: what are your feelings about living in Taiwan?

I love Taiwan, the place, the people. And the history is very interesting, and also very moving. When I came here, it seemed to me that I had found a place where life was in some ways more natural and where the people were themselves more sensible and sane. But don't tell them that I said that.

Ok. We promise we won't tell anyone.

Ok. Then my secret's safe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

STEVEN FRATTALI is an American writer living in Taipei and Boston. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry. He is also the author of several critical works, among them *Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost* (ELS,2002) and *Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism*. (Peter Lang, 2005)

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